



WEBFOOTER EXTRA

December 2019

Tillamook County Resort Towns *Rockaway's Dance Pavilion*



Rockaway's New Dance Pavilion

Rockaway's New Dance Pavilion opened in 1929.

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Tillamook County Resort Towns

Rockaway's Dance Pavilion by Mark Moore



The New Rockaway Dance Pavilion opened on March 2, 1929.

With our previous articles on Tillamook County history by Steve King, we have seen the popularity of many towns that contributed to the growth of Tillamook County. With a busy stop on the Pacific Railway and Navigation railroad line, Rockaway became one of the larger resort towns in Tillamook County.

With its proximity to Portland, Rockaway became a beach getaway for the well-to-do. Talented performers and musicians who lived in Portland were on the hunt for employment opportunities and they found their way to Rockaway to the new Dance Pavilion, if for a limited engagement.

Thanks to the discovery of several of the postcards of the dance bands who played in Rockaway during the early 1930s, we now have a new chapter in the history of some of the popular dance bands of the day that performed in Portland and up and down the coast.



The roads leading to and from Rockaway were jammed in 1920.

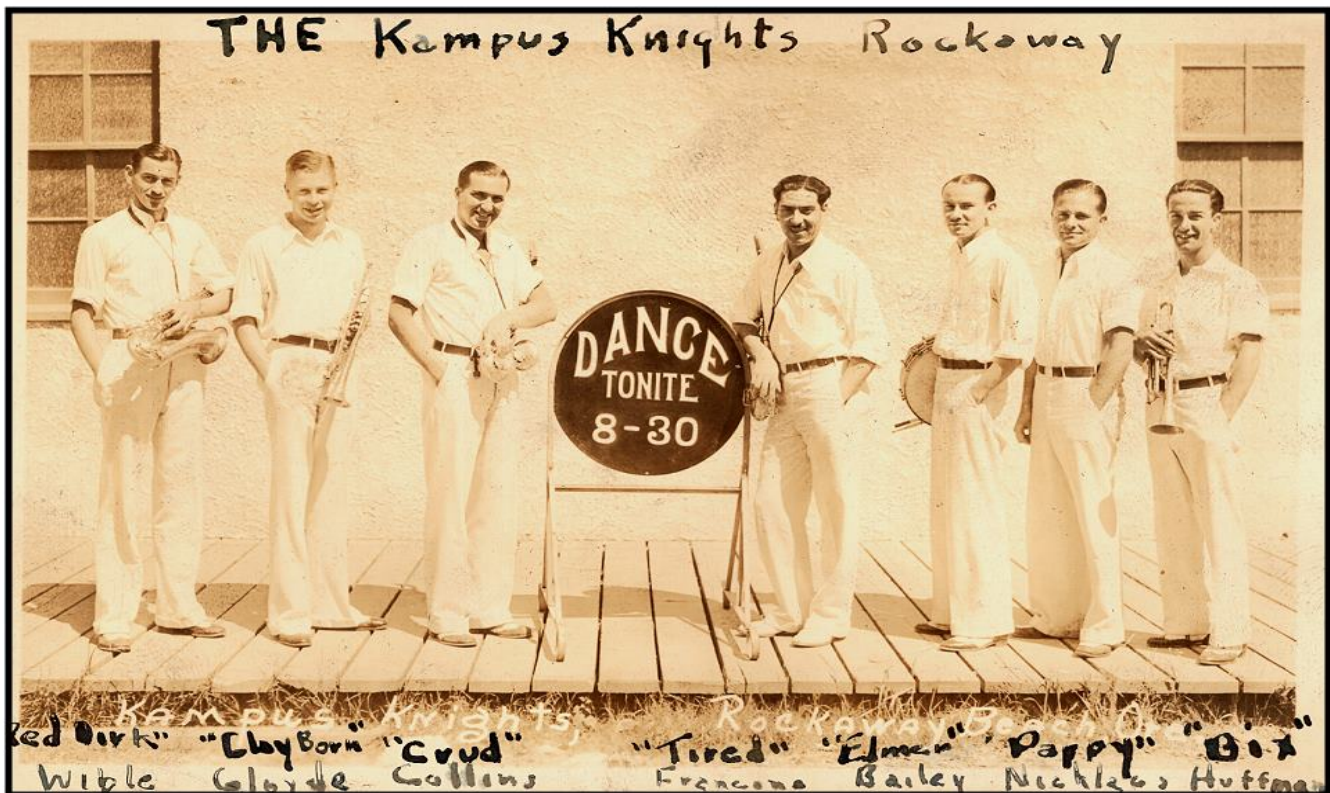


Newly built wooden plank roads in Rockaway would later become Highway 101.



Saltair Dance Hall, circa 1910.

Dancing was popular, especially on weekend nights. The earliest dance hall in Rockaway was the Saltair Dance Hall in South Rockaway and it was a favorite place to go.



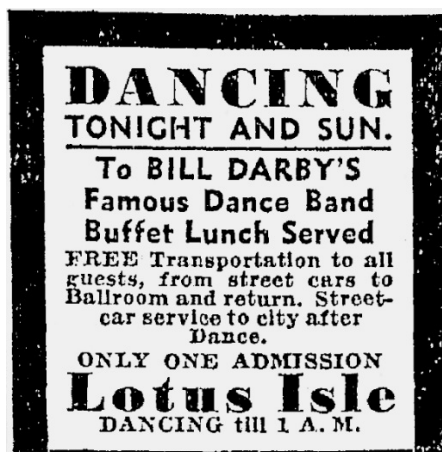
The Kampus Knights performed at the New Dance Pavilion in Rockaway.



Jim Diericks and his OSC Orchestra performed at the Rockaway Dance Pavilion in 1934.



Bill Darby (second from right) and his dance band performed at the Rockaway Dance Pavilion.



In these ads from *The Oregonian* from 1930 and 1931, Bill Darby and his Famous Dance Band were the featured musicians at the Ballroom at Lotus Isle Amusement Park in Portland.

One of the earliest mentions of Bill Darby and his dance band in a search of *The Oregonian's* archives with NewsBank was on March 5, 1916 when the Darby Novelty Orchestra was performing. Bill Darby performed on the KGW Hoot Owls on March 9, 1924. Bill Darby and his orchestra were engaged for several weeks at the Cotillion Hall in the last two months of 1924.

On January 8, 1926, Bill Darby performed at the Third Anniversary celebration of the Hoot Owls at the Multnomah Hotel Ballroom. On September 22, 1926, Darby's New Orchestra performed at Christensen's Hall.

For several months in 1927, Bill Darby's Cotillion Dance Band performed at the Cotillion Hall beginning on February 26. In succeeding articles the "ball-bearing spring floor" at the Cotillion Ballroom at southwest Fourth and Washington streets was mentioned.

Bill Darby's Jantzen Beach Band performed at "Portland's largest dance floor" on opening night at the Jantzen Beach Ballroom on May 25, 1928. Multiple mentions of his performances at the Jantzen Beach Ballroom appeared in *The Oregonian* in July 1928. On December 16, 1928, Bill Darby and his band performed at the Parkrose Pavilion. Bill Darby and his band performed for a Boat Swan Dance on May 12, 1929. On Feb. 16, 1920, Bill Darby and his band were at the Spring Opening of Parkrose Beach.

Beginning on May 24, 1930, the Bill Darby Orchestra had a successful summer engagement at the opening of Playland Amusement Park in Seattle. By October that year, Bill was back in Portland. Bill Darby and his Lotus Isle Dance Band performed at the Lotus Isle Ballroom in late 1930 and 1931. In the 1930s Bill Darby was heard regularly on KXL and KWJJ. He operated Bill Darby Studio where he gave piano and music lessons. In the 1950s, Bill Darby was busy playing at high school proms including Roosevelt High in St. Johns. He also performed regularly at Oaks Amusement Park and at the Red Steer Restaurant at the Stockyards.



Real photo postcard of Don DeForest (far right) and his Orchestra at Rockaway Beach, Oregon.

The first mention of Don DeForest in The Oregonian was on November 20, 1925 when he was a percussionist in Ray Bezanson's Band in the KGW Hoot Owls program orchestra where he had just returned from a two-year tour and has "created a sensation among dance orchestra followers throughout the coast." On Nov. 27, 1929, McElroy's Ballroom featured Don DeForest and his Radio Band where you could "Celebrate Thanksgiving." On Feb. 22, 1930, Don DeForest's Serenaders performed at the Multnomah Hotel Ballroom.

On April 30, 1931, Don DeForest's Jantzen Beach KGW Band were featured at 9:15 pm. They were described as "a snappy outfit playing in a playground atmosphere." Then on May 1, Don DeForest and his Jantzen Beach Orchestra were featured on KGW in the Hoot Owl's time slot. On May 15, Don DeForest and his band played the Jantzen Beach Ballroom. Don DeForest and his band continued to perform in the Portland area in 1931 and 1932 including DeHoney's Grand Ballroom. On October 22, 1932, Don DeForest and his Oregonians were playing at New York's Palais D'Or where they auditioned for NBC.

After playing in New York for a while, Don DeForest and his orchestra were back in Portland on March 5, 1935 performing on KGW. On June 23, 1935, it was announced that Don DeForest and his orchestra began a series of broadcasts from the Swan excursion boat on KEX radio. On Sept. 24, 1935, Don DeForest was a regular on KGW again playing at DeHoney's Ballroom.

In Nov. 1935, Don DeForest and his orchestra performed for the Police Reserves Ball and the 25th Annual Portland Auto Show. On Dec. 30, 1935, Don DeForest and his 12-piece orchestra opened the new Berg's Chalet on Canyon Road for a College Night Dance.

Don DeForest and his orchestra performed for a Veterans of Foreign Wars picnic on July 4th, 1936 at Viking Park near the Sandy River and Base Line Road (now Stark St). In the ensuing years, he performed at many other venues including the Alderwood Country Club and Tiny Dumont's Park on 117th, between Stark and Division streets.

On June 13, 1948, he helped with a Vanport Flood benefit dance at the Midtown Ballroom at southwest Fourth and Taylor St. In 1950, Don DeForest and his orchestra performed at the Multnomah County Fair in Gresham. And the last mention of Don DeForest in The Oregonian was at Tony's Market Circus on Union Avenue across from Jantzen Beach in 1952.



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