

WASHINGTON HERITAGE REGISTER

A) Identification

Historic Name: **Edwards Pavilion**
Common Name: Edwards Resort – Dance Pavilion; Lake Lawrence Lodge
Address: 15735 Topaz Drive SE
City: Yelm County: Thurston

B) Site Access (describe site access, restrictions, etc.)

Property is located south side of Lindsey Road in Yelm on Topaz Drive in the Lake Lawrence community.

C) Property owner(s), Address and Zip

Name: Lake Lawrence Community Club
Address: 15735 Topaz Drive SE
City: Yelm State: WA Zip: 98597

D) Legal boundary description and boundary justification

Tax No./Parcel: A portion of Tax Parcel #: 58560300000
Boundary Justification: The nominated property includes only the Edwards Pavilion and the ground it is sitting on. It does not include additional acreage that is part of the community holdings.

FORM PREPARED BY

Name: John Slevin
Address: 17309 Topaz Loop SE
City / State / Zip: Yelm, WA 98597
Email: jmslevinator@gmail.com
Phone: (360) 481-1339
Nomination Date: July 2024

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E) Category of Property (Choose One)

- building structure (irrigation system, bridge, etc.) district
 object (statue, grave marker, vessel, etc.) cemetery/burial site
 historic site (site of an important event) archaeological site
 traditional cultural property (spiritual or creation site, etc.)
 cultural landscape (habitation, agricultural, industrial, recreational, etc.)

F) Area of Significance – Check as many as apply

- The property belongs to the early settlement, commercial development, or original native occupation of a community or region.*
- The property is directly connected to a movement, organization, institution, religion, or club which served as a focal point for a community or group.*
- The property is directly connected to specific activities or events which had a lasting impact on the community or region.*
- The property is associated with legends, spiritual or religious practices, or life ways which are uniquely related to a piece of land or to a natural feature.*
- The property displays strong patterns of land use or alterations of the environment which occurred during the historic period (cultivation, landscaping, industry, mining, irrigation, recreation).*
- The property is directly associated with an individual who made an important contribution to a community or to a group of people.*
- The property has strong artistic, architectural or engineering qualities, or displays unusual materials or craftwork belonging to a historic era.*
- The property was designed or built by an influential architect, or reflects the work of an important artisan.*
- Archaeological investigation of the property has or will increase our understanding of past cultures or life ways.*

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G) Property Description

Edwards Pavilion sits on an irregular lot on the shore of Lake Lawrence in rural Thurston County. It is located just south of the town of Yelm, and east of the town of Rainier. It sits on the north side of Lake Lawrence, capturing the expansive view of the 300-acre body of water. The immediate site gently slopes down to the southeast. Landscaping is limited to a cluster of deciduous trees on the southeast corner and decorative planting beads at the main entry.

The rectangular pavilion is approximately 120' x 140' and sits on a concrete post and pier foundation. The rear wall has additional supporting on CMU block. Completed in 1923, the building was constructed from trees collected from the property which remain as exposed peeled logs for the walls, floors, and roof systems. The building has a gable-on-hip roof covered in asphalt shingles and has exposed rafter tails on all four sides of the building.

On the main façade, away from the river is a projecting gable covered entry which shelters a slightly recessed entry. Here, a set of modern aluminum doors are highlighted by large, fixed pane windows in wood frames. The exterior of the building is clad with board and baton siding of plywood. Windows have largely been replaced with vinyl sliding units. The south, or lakeside façade, is nearly covered with a banding of large, fixed pane wood windows, which afford views to the lake. Also on this façade at the southeast corner is a contemporary wooden deck, supported by 4"x4" posts.

The inside of the building primarily consists of a large, open indoor hall with exposed log structural elements. This barn-like space has an open central dance area with side aisles of lower ceilinged spaces. Partitioned spaces are found at the south and north corners and provide room for bathrooms, a lounge, a kitchen, and storage spaces. These walls are constructed of board and batten sheets of plywood, and tongue & groove cedar planks. Centered on the west wall within the side aisle, is a large fireplace of thin slabs of basalt stone with wide mortar joints. The firebox has been covered with a modern insert, and per historic images the entire fireplace has been resurfaced from its original brick finish. Walls on the west side and east sides of the open room, and the exposed sloping ceiling, are covered with varied size tongue & groove pine boards, stained and sealed. Floors in these areas have period sheet linoleum. The kitchen is currently in a state of disrepair, awaiting rehabilitation.

The main hall is defined by a peeled truss log-system of upright posts, bents, and rafters. The underside of the roof is clad in plywood. The dance floor is wood planks, sealed with a high gloss finish. Lighting is limited to a series of schoolhouse pendant fixtures attached to the beams and logs wrapped in Christmas lights. At the south end of the dance floor is a raised wooden stage area. Painted, the stage has no fixed backdrop and is open to the lake views. To the east of the stage is a set of dog-leg stairs which rises to a platform at a faux loft area for storage. Heating units are exposed and hang from the ceiling. Further air circulation is provided by fans mounted to the peak of the roof. Some area of the dance floor are enclosed by log rails between the bents.

H) Significance

Edwards Pavilion at Lake Lawrence, just outside of Yelm is historically significance for its direct connection to the recreational history of Thurston County. Constructed in 1923, the pavilion was built as part of the Edwards Resort, a popular fishing, camping, swimming, and vacationing spot in rural Thurston County for over 50 years. The pavilion is a rare surviving example of its type.

The property where the resort sits was purchased by Frank and Jennie Edwards in 1906. The land had been logged beginning in 1892 and the lake was named after loggers Lindley and Sam Lawrence. When the Edwards purchased the land (some 400 acres), most of the property surrounding had been cleared, however by the 1920s, a solid stand of second growth trees had taken hold. Shortly after their purchase, in 1911, the level of the lake was raised to accommodate a Olympia Power & Light generator at Deschutes Falls in Tumwater. This increased the volume of the lake and made the area a scenic refuge. With a view of Mount Rainier from its shores, the lake was teeming with fish.

Capitalizing on the potential as a tourist spot for fishing and swimming, the Edwards began renting boats in 1922. During the day, guests could swim in the lake and utilize a newly constructed bath house. They also installed floating docks, a high drive, and one of the tallest slides in the south sound area. Newspaper accounts note that Edwards had even purchased four-hundred dollars' worth of new bathing suits for the convenience of his guests from the Olympia Kitting Mills in 1925.

Further revenue was generated by the construction of several small cabins for overnight guests and a large dance pavilion in 1923. Reportedly the Edwards commissioned J.B. Martin, a local bridge builder for the Northern Pacific Railroad, to construct the pavilion. He was helped by fellow carpenters Louie and Albert Reichel, and a "Mr. Armstrong." The team constructed the 120' x 140' building using hand peeled and hewn fir trees from the property. For additional structural support, steel rods were hand-tooled by the team. Construction took about a year, and at the time, the dance pavilion rested on the shore of the lake (in 1929 the lake was lowered to its natural height, and the pavilion was left 300 yards from the water).

Quickly Edwards' Resort became a popular vacation designation for both local and regional tourist. Despite the draw of the lake itself (which was filled with trout in 1951), the dance pavilion soon became an asset of equal value. Billed as the "Northwest's Most Beautiful Ballroom," the venue hosted countless parties, dinners, reunions, weddings, picnics, and community dances.

Competition came with other regional resorts such as the Boston Harbor Resort, Anderson's Shaddywood Park on Patterson Lake, Deep Lake Resort, Linger Longer Resort, Johnson Point Resort, Maple Beach Resort, Moore's Sunrise Resort, Bronson's Resort, Mullen's Resort, and Summit Lake Resort. Most however did not have dance pavilions, and those that did, were not as large as the Edwards Pavilion.

To keep the facility running, Frank and Jennie, with a few helpers, worked long hours, running the resort and dances, as well as cooking and serving a Saturday midnight supper to guests. By the mid-1940s Saturday night dances at "Edwards Pavilion" became quite a popular spot in the region. The Edwards advertised heavily in local and regional newspapers. Dances were held every other Saturday, from April through October. Some of the biggest bands in the area would come and play at the pavilion. People often came as far away as Tacoma and Seattle. Reportedly as many as 1,200 people showed up for the dances, leaving standing room only in the large dance hall. The music typically consisted of a 6 to 10-piece band. Between the bands, Lillian (Johnston) Erickson often entertained the crowd on the piano. Locals fondly remember that she would keep the group in rhythm by bouncing on the piano bench to the tempo of the music.

Food was usually prepared and served by Jennie with a small crew of five additional women. Shirley Edwards, Jennie's daughter, recalls helping her mother at a young age. The Edwards' boys, Ozzie, Dallas, and Lee, worked in concessions selling pop, candy, gum, and cigarettes. They also manned the coat check stand. For a charge of \$.10 each, coats were folded and stuffed into a cubby hole and a brass tag given to each person with a number corresponding to the number on the cubby hole. Supplies for the concessions came from the H.L. Wolf & Co. store in Yelm which Frank Edwards also managed.

Initially restroom facilities were located in a separate building, just a short walk from the lodge. It wasn't until about 1950 when Lee and Ruby Edwards put in the present bathrooms within the pavilion.

Children were welcome at the dances and a special space was built to accommodate them. A room about 20' x 20' feet provided space for "small wooden cribs" in two rows, stacked 3 high. Each crib was lined with a cotton mattress pad and had a safety latch on the outside so the babies couldn't fall out. Mothers checked their babies regularly

during the evening.

When the weather was warm, wooden window awnings could be opened to let in the fresh breezes. The present fireplace was the only source of heat in the early days and people learned to dress warmly and dance a little faster to keep warm. At the time of construction there was no electric lighting. Instead, a series of gas lamps with 2 ½ foot stems were hung between the beams. Often, halfway through the evening they had to be refueled. Electricity came to the area in 1926 and electric lines were installed to the pavilion in 1927. During the winter months the Edwards chipped away at the thick ice on the lake and stored it in the icehouse (made of railroad ties and sawdust) to use as refrigeration all year round.

At the height of the resort there were 14 cabins on the property, 75 camping spots, picnic grounds, a baseball field, and 110 hand-built wooden boats. In 1948, Frank and Jennie's son, Lee and his wife Ruby, took over running the resort and summer dances. Lee built a 20-foot water slide that became quite an attraction during the 1950s. During that time the resort season started in April and ended after duck season in the middle of January. While the era of the big dances ended around 1960, the family continued to keep the doors open and retained ownership of the property for another 10+ years.

In 1973, after nearly 50 years, the resort closed, along with camping and Saturday dances. At that time, a large portion of the resort property was also sold off to allow the building of residential homes. The Edwards family decided to gift the lodge and waterfront to the Lake Lawrence Community Club (LLCC).

After taking over the facility, the LLCC began renting it out for weddings and special events. Since that time, it continues to be a popular rental facility and is still used most weekends throughout the year. It remains in excellent condition, and closely resembles the dance hall of the past. It also provides a place for the members of the Lake Lawrence community to gather for dinners, events, and meetings.

NOTE: Adjacent to the lodge (and not part of this nomination) still sits the original 1895 home of Frank and Jennie Edwards, now inhabited by their grandson Gary Edwards and his wife Debbie. This two-story house originally sat down the hill near the lake. In 1908, three teams of horses pulled the house from the lakeside to up on the hill where it presently sits.

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I) Documentation

Xerox and attach any information or evidence that supports the property's significance.

Written Sources (books, articles, newspapers):

Within these Walls, written by Neo Brown, Daughter of Lee Edwards

Article from Nisqually Valley News, 1985

Lake Lawrence Community Club website (<http://lakelawrenceyelm.com/history/>)

"In the Superior Court of Thurston County Washington: Olympia Light & Power..." The Washington Standard, December 1, 1905.

"A.L. Borey & Co., of Tacoma have been awarded contract for..." The Washington Standard, August 18, 1911.

"Foshay-Lemon Misleading Slurs..." The Washington Standard, April 25, 1913.

"Entertainment in Honor of Old Time Residents" The Washington Standard, September 7, 1920.

"Resort Proprietors is Home Goods Booster" The Olympian, July 1, 1925.

"Frank Edwards will hold a formal opening of his resort..." The Olympian, April 29, 1928.

"Thurston County Towns Plan Picnic" The Tacoma Daily Ledger, July 8, 1928.

"Rainier Club Will Picnic Sunday" The Olympian, August 23, 1929.

"Rainier Club Will Hold Picnic Today" The Tacoma Daily Ledger, August 25, 1929.

Advertisement: H.L. Wolf & Co. The Olympian, January 11, 1935.

"Mr. and Mrs. Osborn Edwards have returned from their wedding trip..." The Olympian, July 3, 1937.

“Resort Owners Plan For Great Campaign” The Olympian, September 11, 1947.

“Thurston County and Capital: Times Travel Tips” The Olympian, July 22, 1951.

Obit - “Frank N. Edwards” The Olympian, October 12, 1956.

“Week End Rodeo Scheduled In Roy” The Olympian, August 31, 1962.

Oral History/Interviews:

Gary and Debbie Edwards, Grandson of Edwards Resort founder, 15739 Topaz Dr,
Yelm, WA

J) Map and Photographs

Attach copies of historic maps or photos if available, and current photos (min 5 x 7 digital images, 300 DPI). Include a current map – appropriate Google Earth/U.S.G.S. map and parcel map – with the location of the property and its boundaries clearly marked. (see instructions)



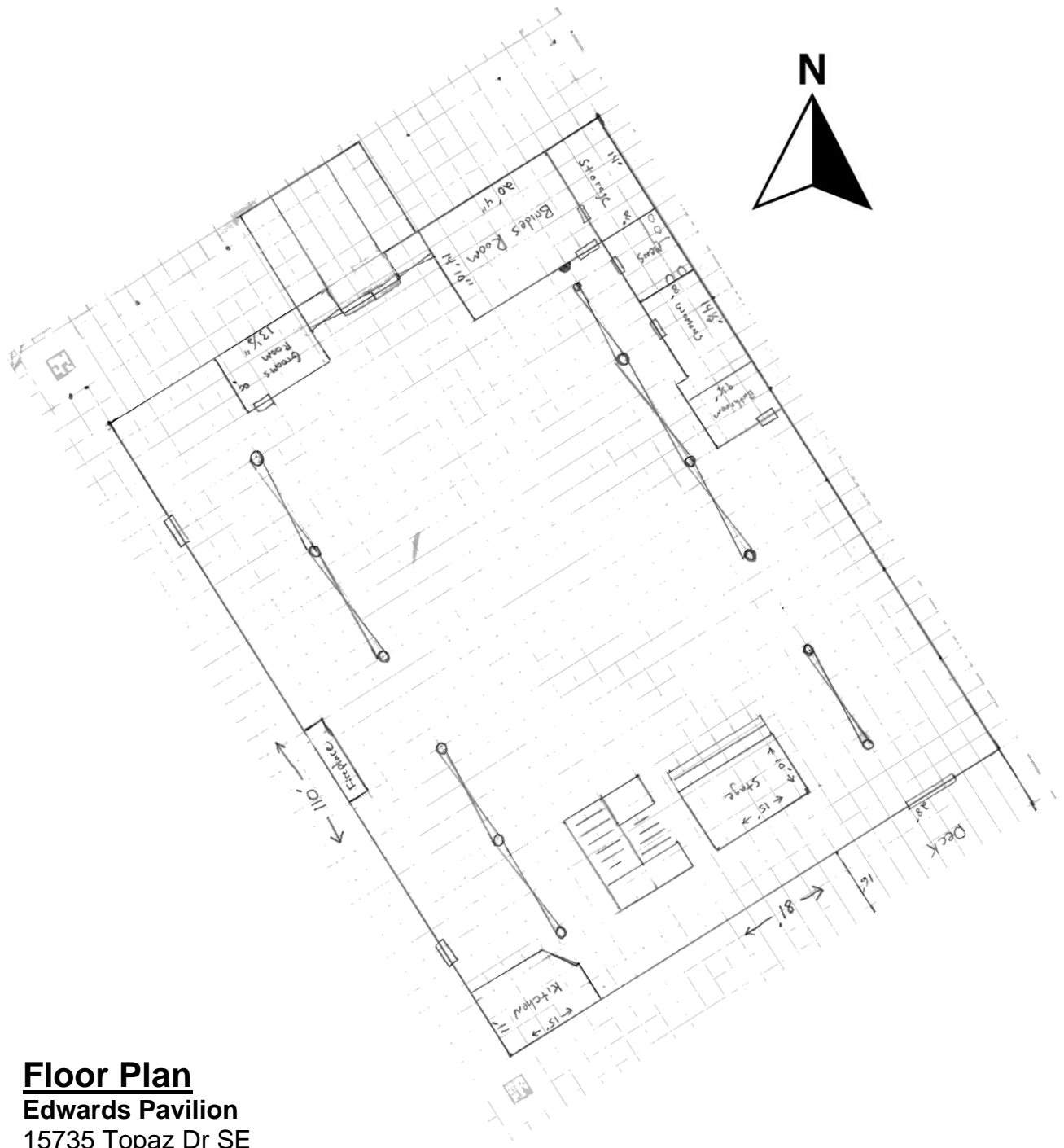
Thurston County Assessor Map

Edwards Pavilion
15735 Topaz Dr SE
Parcel No. 58560300100



Aerial Map

Edwards Pavilion
15735 Topaz Dr SE
Parcel No. 58560300100



Floor Plan
Edwards Pavilion
 15735 Topaz Dr SE
 Yelm, WA 98597

Grand Opening
DANCE
JULY 4th
EDWARDS PAVILION
Lake Lawrence
Featuring—
Fritz Peterson
 and His Band
 Follow the Road Signs—
 Yelm, McKenna, Rainier
 MIXERS and ICE
EDWARDS RESORT
 YELM

The Olympian – July 3, 1952

EDWARDS RESORT ... LAKE LAWRENCE



The combination of Lee and Ruby Edwards' newly-decorated, rustic-interioried dance-niterie at Edwards Resort, Lake Lawrence, and the Fritz Peterson 1952 Version Dixieland Band is proving to be the year's outstanding delightful surprise to Saturday night entertainment seekers. Located approximately five miles from Yelm and McKenna, Edwards Pavilion can be reached easily following road signs from those two places. Dancing hours are from 9:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. For further information or reservations phone Yelm 2222 or Hillside 3271. (Sorry, no minors).

The Olympian – October 24, 1952



LOOK!
Edwards Resort .. at
LAKE LAWRENCE
Opening This Saturday
Dancing 'til 2:00 a.m.
See Our Ad in Friday's Paper

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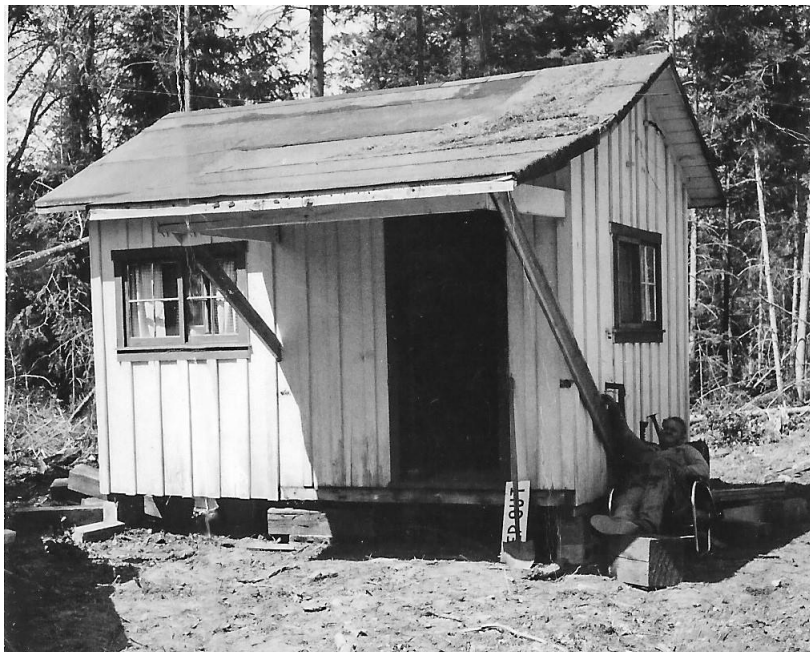
The Olympian – May 1, 1957

New Year's Eve Party
Northwest's Most Beautiful Ballroom
Edwards Resort
Lake Lawrence
For
Invitations & Reservations
Phone Yelm 2222

The Olympian – December 27, 1957



Ariel view of Edwards Resort – c. 1955.



Cabin at Edwards Resort – c. 1935.



Edwards Resort baseball field with dance pavilion in foreground – c. 1928.



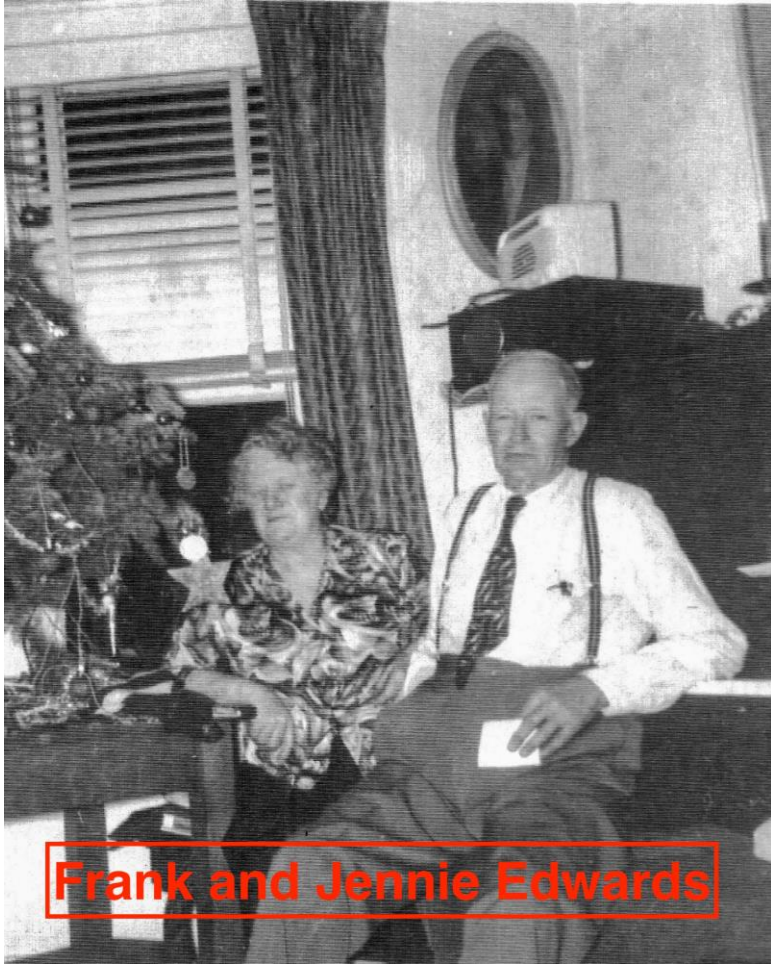
Swimming high dive and slide at Edwards Resort – c. 1958.



Edwards Resort swimming area. Note boats in lake – c. 1953.



Edwards Resort swimming area. – c. 1938.



Frank and Jennie Edwards



Lee and Ruby Edwards

Current Images



Main entry facade.



Northeast corner.



Rear / Southeast facade.



North side facade.



Main entrance detail.



Dance hall view to the south, towards lake and stage area.



Dance hall view to the north towards main entry.



Detail of stage.



Detail of open truss system.



Lounge area.



Detail of fireplace on west wall.



View from rear deck toward Lake Lawrence.