

EDGEWATER PARK DANCE PAVILION

The Edgewater Park dance pavilion was located just across Mill Creek on the water’s edge from about 1926 to about 1945, shortly after World War II. It was considered one of the finest outdoor dance facilities in the country, featuring both local and touring bands.

One of the first orchestras to play at Edgewater was led by Jackie Coogan, an early child star of the movies, with Betty Grable, later a prominent actress, as soloist. The Edgewater itself was featured in a film called “Movie Balls” whose chief photographer said it was “one of the most attractive outdoor settings for filming dance scenes I have ever seen. There may be larger and more expensively equipped pavilions along the coast, but none have a better natural setting than this.”

Edgewater offered open dancing, dance contests, dance exhibitions, jitney dancing, as well as boxing and wrestling matches and other events. Jitney dancing was the practice of paying for each dance in advance. Admission to a Jitney dance was free, but once inside the pavilion, dancers were escorted to a roped off area), where they purchased tickets for a few cents per dance. There were usually 16 dances per hour, and between numbers, rope boys cleared the dance floor and collected the money for the next number.

Edgewater Park was on land owned by the Schwarz family. It was developed with the idea that an outdoor dance pavilion would be a worthwhile addition to the city’s recreation resources. During the winter and

when there was inclement weather, the dancing was moved to the Arcadia Ballroom on the upper floor of the Schwarz Building where the plaza is now located at First and Main.

The premier Walla Walla band was the Arcadians, billed as “Southeastern Washington’s Greatest Dance Band—a modern dance orchestra that combines all the natural spirit of youth with the musical skill of years of experience into a group playing all the latest types of dance music with an unusually fine rhythm colored with beautiful harmonic effects.” Instruments represented in the band included violin, saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, drums, and piano, along with vocalists. In addition to touring the Pacific Northwest, the group played regularly at Edgewater Park, as well as the Arcadia Ballroom.

The Arcadia Ballroom was located in the old armory building on the west side of Mill Creek, and housed the Arcadia Dancing Academy, as well as featuring public dances several nights a week and on all holidays, boxing and wrestling events, roller skating, and private parties.

The Arcadia was a dependable and attractive place to go when it was rainy or cold,. But when the weather was good, the Edgewater with its 8000 square foot dance pavilion and cool breezes off the water was the place to be for dancers throughout southeast Washington and northeast Oregon. Willows lined the creek, there were benches along the railing, a bandstand on the east end, and strings of lights lit up the night.



Edgewater Park Dance Pavilion on Mill Creek viewed from across Colville Street during the March 31, 1931 Flood



Presenting
HARRY LEWIS
And His
“Sweet Swing Combination”
12 Piece Band
Tuesday Evening, May 18th
YOU’VE HEARD THEM FROM THE COLLEGE
INN, SAN DIEGO.

SPECIAL ENTERTAINMENT
Miss Dorothy Brandon
Alternating Numbers with
Richard Davis and Don Best

EDGEWATER
Adm. 75c-25c



May, 1937

What All Southeastern Washington and
Northeastern Oregon Has Been Waiting
For.

**DANCE
EDGEWATER**
OPEN AIR DANCING
TO-NITE
8000 Sq. Ft. of New Dance Floor

WAIT ’TIL YOU DANCE ON IT!
AND YOU CAN DANCE
ALL EVENING
GENTLEMEN 75c LADIES 15c

Dean Richmond’s Arcadians
Augmented to 7 pieces
Dance Rhythm A’plenty.

ALSO!
5th Preliminary Walla Walla City Cham-
pionship all around dance contest. Who is
going to be Walla Walla’s most popular
dancing couple?
REMEMBER!

MONDAY IS BARGAIN NITE
Gents 50c Ladies 10c
THURSDAY — SATURDAY
Gentlemen 75c Ladies 15c

DANCE and STAY YOUNG

May, 1928

Starting Next
Monday Night
Bargain Week
EDGEWATER
Open Air DANCING

Monday - Always
Bargain Dancing

Thursday
Jitney Dance
No Gate Charge

Saturday
Jitney Dance
No Gate Charge

Free Dancing:
Thursdays and
Saturdays 8:45-9:15
DEAN RICHMOND’S
ARCADIANS
Southeastern Washington’s
Greatest Music

July, 1927