

## MAPLE GROVE

Maple Grove was a popular social gathering place for people of all ages from at least the 1920's through the 1950's. It was on the southeast corner of Lickert-Harder and Duff Washa Roads in Benton Township, just on the edge of Turtle Creek. Packer Creek was about ¼ mile to the south. The Maple Grove Schoolhouse #9, also possibly known as the Fralich Schoolhouse, was either part of Maple Grove or just adjacent to it, on Duff Washa Road.

The area was characterized by cool woods, open grassy areas, and low, somewhat wet & swampy ground along Turtle Creek. This is as it was remembered by some of the (now) older people that went there in the 1920's & 1930's. The group of women, in the picture shown below, is from a Maple Grove gathering of the Rocky Ridge St. John Lutheran Church Sewing Circle and dates between 1921 & 1932. The second picture, showing men and children, appears to have been taken at the same gathering, as the same cars and Coca Cola cases are in both. Notice, in the background of both photos, the old cars and the somewhat thick grove of trees.



L-R: Mrs. (Rev) A.C. Misch, Mrs. Henry Myers, Mrs. Art Hablitzel, Mrs. Chas Bulhler, Mrs. Bill Banky, Mrs. Chas Liske, Mrs. Bill Buhrow, Mrs. Fred Lickert



L-R: Rev. A. C. Misch, (?), Chas Liske, Henry Banky, Bill Banky, Fred Lickert, Art Lickert (Boy's names not known)

Frank Gluth remembers Maple Grove as a popular place for family gatherings, be it picnics, wedding receptions, anniversary parties, or any special occasion.

By the 1930's, it was especially known for dancing. A July 25, 1930 Exponent advertisement stated "Old Time & New Time dancing every Saturday night at Maple Grove". Apparently a good time was had by all as evidenced by a July 31, 1931 Exponent Society News item. "Mrs. Francis Siegenthaler announced that Old Time dances were being held at Maple Grove every Saturday Night. She knew that those who attended both events (*both old & new time dances?*) had a better time than she did while she was away. It seems both mosquitoes and 'smart aleck's' infested the place where she danced."

Donna Gyde remembers the Old Time Dances as featuring Square Dance and Schottish Dance (polka type of round dance) as well as others. Hilda Avery remembers dances such as the Waltz, Foxtrot, and Charleston. There was a band or orchestra for most, if not all, of the Saturday night dances. Shown in the photo is "Bo Bo & The \_\_\_hawks" taken at Maple Grove.



Bo Bo and The \_\_\_hawks

Donna Gyde says that “it was a great place for a group to go to dance on a Saturday night. Take your own bottle and buy your own mix and snacks”. Another side of it was given by Ruth Martin. Her son, Richard Martin, said that her diaries often talked about going to dances and parties at Maple Grove in the early 1930’s, but she almost always wrote about it as “... too many drunks”. Ruth would go to the dances with her friend Erma Markley who did not live very far from Maple Grove. Hilda Avery, as told to her daughter Pat Avery, remembers the dances.... “young women standing near the dance floor waiting to be asked to dance. The popular guy was Harvey Base... he loved to dance and was the favorite! After a while the girls would just get up and dance with each other...” She also remembers a side room where liquor could be bought ... she wasn’t allowed it that room, per her brother’s warnings... and another small room that you could buy a sandwich if you wanted one.

Maple Grove , according to Hilda Avery was closed during Lent because all of the young people would give up dancing for Lent. Ruth Martin's diaries talked about some of the dances and parties being sponsored by the Catholic Church. (She did not say which church it was.)

Below is a picture of the dance floor at Maple Grove. As with any good dance floor, it was made of wood. It was, as seen in this picture, a fairly large, wide open dance floor inside of a barn sized building. There is quite a crowd at this dance. This, according to those would went to Maple Grove on a regular basis, is a normal sized crowd and of course all would be dressed in their finest dance/party clothes.



Maple Grove Dance Hall

Besides the many gatherings, parties, and the dancing that have been mentioned, there were also baseball games played at Maple Grove. Many of the area towns had their own baseball teams and would play purely for the fun of it. Of course, it sometimes got a little carried away.



Maple Grove Baseball Team – 1947 (Location of photo is unknown – Maple Grove?)

Hilda Avery tells that “There were ball games played on Saturday during the summer months. There were even bleachers to sit on. The games would be during the day and the dances at night. The teams were really competitive and ... the Genoa gang came over to ‘fight’ the local team. Two of (*my*) brothers were involved, but it wasn’t a nasty fight...more like wrestling”.

How long did Maple Grove last? Without having read the old newspaper articles, it appears that it was a social gathering place at least in the 1920’s and possibly before. As to its most popular period, it was during the time of the Saturday night dances of the 1930’s and 1940’s. Frank Gluth remembers going to a party after the S-OH Inter Society play in the spring of 1947, his Junior year. “It may have

been a normal Saturday night dance. I recall they did have an orchestra there that night". He also recalls going out there at other, later, times and is sure it was open into at least 1948. The dances ended when the old dance hall building burned down sometime in the 1950's. Richard Marin has searched the 1949-50-51 Ottawa County Farm Directory. It lists the Maple Grove Picnic Grounds as still in existence. Sharon Liske remembers, as a child in the mid 1950's, of going to Maple Grove for family picnics. There were picnic tables in an open grassy area. Surrounding was a "fence" of white posts connected with a single metal cable. She does not know if there were still dances being held.

Little, if anything, is left of Maple Grove. The property is still a somewhat wooded area with a low, swampy area along Turtle Creek. There is an old building near the road that only those who went there could say if it is the old dance hall that was on the grounds. There does remain, of course, the memories of those who went to Maple Grove and enjoyed a pleasant Saturday with their family and friends.

Written in June, 2011 – Thanks to the following for their help and especially their memories.

Hilda Avery (Age 97) via her daughter Pat Avery - Memories

Donna Gyde – Memories

Ruth Martin – Diary Entries as provided by her son Richard Martin

Frank Gluth – Memories & Photographs (Orchestra, Dance Floor, Baseball Team)

Richard Martin – School, Maple Grove Locations & Ottawa County Farm Directory

Amanda Liske – Photographs (1920's – 30's)

Sharon Liske - Memories



(Ben Shaffer)

Elmore's softball team that won the Ottawa County Championship in 1947.  
Back row, left to right: Ben Shaffer, Norman Damschroder, Julius Marko, Jim Witty,  
Carl "Sox" Wainwright, Jack Miltz, Ward Whaley.  
Front row: Bill Hetrick, Dick Ames, Peggy Kroos (bat girl),  
ROBERT SCHUSTER  
Henry Kroos

Photo taken at Maple Grove in 1947. Note the name on the building on the right.