

Recreation Hall a Lost Landmark

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Wausaukee's recreation hall was razed in 1967 to make way for the Evergreen Plaza housing units, but it remains a long - remembered landmark. Massive is the only word for the rambling brick building that once stood on the north end of town.

Ed Kunke, a contractor from DesPlaines, Ill., built the recreation hall in 1929 with a hotel, dance hall and recreation center in mind. An identical structure was built in Chicago at Cermak Ave. and DesPlaines Road.

Kunke never finished the second story hotel area due to financial difficulties. A succession of lessees operated the business for over 20 years. The hall became a center for wedding dances, proms and parties, and the sports center included four bowling alleys and a fine basketball floor.

In 1951 Charles Jakups sold the complex to a group calling themselves the Albertian Brothers who planned to operate it as a sanitarium. Legal difficulties over fund solicitations resulted when the Catholic Church declined to recognize the brothers as a religious arm of the church. Eventually the bowling alleys gathered dust and the building deteriorated.

Two Albertian brothers and their dogs lived in the building for many years, maintaining a small chapel in the former bar area. The last resident, Brother Matthew, died in 1966. Those who toured the vacant hall said the building was filled with remnants of the past. Old clothing, plants and furniture were found in the barroom, soda fountain and two upstairs apartments. The floor of the basketball court had heaved from the frost, but the old pins were still there.