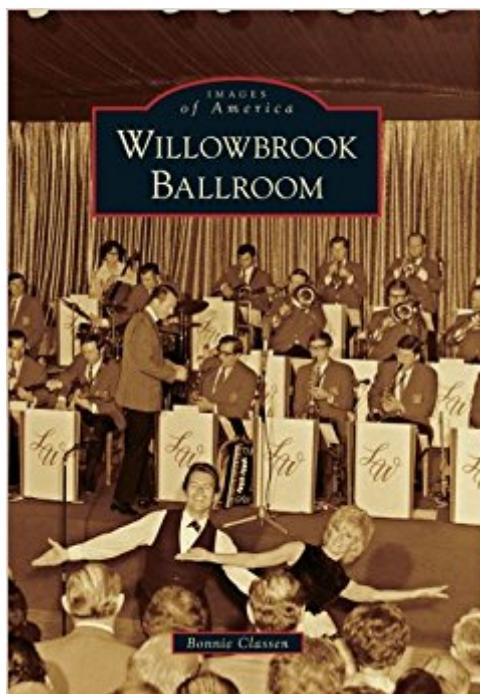


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# Willowbrook Ballroom (Images Of America)



## **Synopsis**

The Willowbrook Ballroom was originally built as an outdoor dance pavilion named Oh Henry Park by Austrian immigrant John Verderbar. Wildly successful, it was enlarged and fully enclosed in 1923, and a 10¢-a-dance policy was implemented. Destroyed by fire in 1930, a determined Verderbar hired a crew of 200 carpenters, and a new facility was built to the tune of a then-staggering \$100,000. In 1959, it was renamed the Willowbrook Ballroom, and dancers have since enjoyed the big band sounds of Count Basie, Teddy Lee, Harry James, and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy. As record crowds flocked to the 6,000-square-foot dance floor, the Willowbrook also became a favorite setting for weddings, proms, and other once-in-a-lifetime events. Today, at the height of its popularity, the Willowbrook is one of only five ballrooms of its magnitude in the United States and the only one remaining in the greater Chicagoland area.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Bonnie Classen is a freelance writer and occasional host/promoter of the popular singles dances at the Willowbrook. She utilizes vintage photographs from the family of original owners, among other collections, to tell the story of this south suburban landmark and its surroundings.

Ordered this up upon hearing the news that the Willowbrook was burning down. A total loss of a historic ballroom with one of the best dance floors in America. Nice history with some good pictures.

It's unfortunate that the recent section doesn't have more about the swing revival and the salsa scene, both of which have been high points of the last few decades, but that doesn't detract much.

I ordered the hard cover edition..I am a Willowbrook Alumni. I am so thankful for this book..it has more pix and history of this wonderful place to so many. We just celebrated 95 year anniversary party in Aug 2016. This was the the happiest place for me and my dance family. We miss and will cherish the memories . I never realized the band's that played on that beloved stage. Oh the memories..Oh how I pray they rebuild. Love my book. Thank you Jodwalis Family & Bonnie Classen for this book is priceless!! ☺

Excellent, very insightful and a lot of fun to read, especially now, since it has burned down

My mom loved the book for Christmas. She dances at willow rook. It brings back wonderful memories for her there.

The author has captured and honorably given life in her book to an era of the ballroom age, which through time has slipped through the gaps of our memories. The in-depth research and the essence and ambiance captured in the images thrusts the reader from the pages to the dance floor and beyond. One could imagine him or herself back in time.The benefit; a "Must Read" that you will experience!

I really enjoyed the wonderful depiction of this amazing icon establishment by our author Bonnie Classen. She has captured the essence of the pure class acts that played at the Willowbrook Ballroom. Clearly talented writing in all respects. The vintage photos are original and priceless and were obviously hard to come by. Great editing here as well. I learned alot while reading the well edited and presented paperback, which has the weight of a large coffee table book. Excellent buy in my eyes. I keep it laying on my coffee table. When I have company, they pick it up. I think that says something

Growing up in the southwest suburbs of Chicago I passed the Willowbrook Ballroom dozens of times, never knowing its rich and proud history. Thankfully, I'm up to speed now. Bonnie Classen gives the Willowbrook its due, blending a multitude of fascinating nuggets (Who knew the place was originally named after a famous candy bar?) and plenty of rare photographs. There aren't many

places like this left. Read the book, and you'll be prompted to go pay them a visit!

This book is sure to bring back long-forgotten memories held by those who regularly visited the Willowbrook Ballroom before and during the Big Band Era and the "Nifty Fifties", as well as educate the current generation of dancers and music fans as to the history of this favorite dance venue and Chicago-area landmark. Thoroughly researched and loaded with pictures (many of which are published for the first time), the reader is taken chronologically from the very beginning to the present.

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