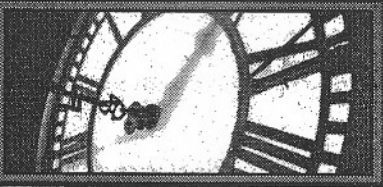


Local History



Bowling for memories

Who remembers the Lucky Strike Bowling Alley on Main Street? This thread recently ran on Thread-city.com's discussion forum.



Tom Beardsley

The Lucky Strike Lanes are now located on Route 32 in Mansfield, but they had originally operated at 872 Main St., near to the Capitol Cinema, for many years before that.

Ernie Gesner, who now lives in California, recalled that when the lanes were located on Main Street during the early 1950s, the bowling complex had a bus station out front, a lunch counter and Bob Connell's Murphy's Taxi Co. He also remembered a room behind the bowling alleys that was frequented by local gamblers. Ernie set up pins there and one year his younger brother Dick took the pin setters out on strike and got an increase in pay.

John Boudreau recalls from Japan that in the early 1960s he played in a junior league there on Saturday mornings. The owners back then hired two professionals to coach the young bowlers and

the *Chronicle* featured a picture of John with one of them, Cathy Dyak, who was a top duckpin bowler at that time.

Florida's Francis "Whitey" Sellers provided the most detailed history of the Lucky Strike Lanes bowling alley. He could not recall the year it was established, but the bowling alley was originally located in the building on the northwest corner of Main and Walnut streets, and it then had eight lanes. The owners subsequently moved the bowling alley to 872 Main St., which had been an automobile garage.

They cut the eight lanes in half, moved them downstairs, and added 10 more lanes upstairs. Whitey recalled a snack bar, a barbershop, an insurance office and a bus terminal at the location, which served the Blue Line that ran from New London to Springfield, Mass., the Eastern Bus Line that ran from Hartford to Providence and Greyhound that ran from New York to Boston.

Frank Barber and Florimond Normandin ran the bowling alley in those days, and every February Lucky Strike hosted the Eastern Duck Pin Bowling Classic com-

Bowling for memories of the Lucky Strike lanes on Main Street

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petition. Large crowds attended these games and sat upon bleacher-type seating especially set up for the event. Frank Barber also ran Willimantic's blue ribbon team from Willimantic, which among others consisted of Nick Tronsky, Steve Dyak and Billy Weirdek.

Vicky and Mike Julian and Joe

Negro from Stafford Springs purchased the Lucky Strike lanes in the 1960s and in 1967 moved the 18 alleys to their present location on Route 32 in Mansfield, adding another 14. Whitey bowled at all the locations.

The current bowling alley in Mansfield was built in 1967, exactly two miles west of the old bowling alley on Main Street.

Construction began in the spring of that year. The plans called for a 170-car parking lot and a 140-square foot building with a frontage trimmed with glass and field stone. The larger construction was from concrete blocks laced with steel beams and the proposed building stood 150 feet from the road. The opening was planned for the first week in

August, 1967. Deb Richards recalled that when she was in the seventh grade her dad used to bowl there and it was her job to wash the oil from his bowling balls.

Are there any other memories of the bowling alley? Does anyone have any photographs of when Lucky Strike was located on Main Street?