Plaza Dance at the Depot
Waterfront Festival - Saturday from 6-8 p.m.
The Anacortes Depot (611 R Ave)

Come listen and dance to the A'Town Big Band playing swing classics at an outdoor Plaza Dance at the Depot during Waterfront Festival. Join us as we renew the tradition of the fishermen’s “pavement dances” which welcomed the salmon seine fleet and their crews for weekend fun and music after a hard week’s work.

Kay Andrich dances in the early 1940s with Glen Denadel (the only couple both facing camera) at the Community Building at Sixth and Q Avenue, what became City Hall and was once the Elks Ballroom. Dances were a regular form of weekend entertainment, occurring also at the Eagles Hall or Oddfellows Lodge. The Goff brothers’ Serenaders performed around Anacortes and regionally. They were favorite performers at the Fishermen Dances that occurred on summer weekends, sometimes as huge street dances on the pavement of Seventh Street, when Anacortes hosted hundreds of purse seine fishermen in town for the salmon season (Above courtesy Kay Andrich.)

“They had street dances back then, in the summer. Oh, they were crowded. I mean, everybody went. They were fun.”

-- Martha Crowell Roll
(Anacortes Museum Oral History)
PLAY FOR FISHERMEN

Anacortes American, July 27, 1939

The popular Goff Brothers orchestra opened the first of a series of Fishermen’s dances in the Eagles’ Crystal ballroom last Friday night to a crowd of 200 couples. They will play every Friday night in the ballroom, except the Friday of the Pageant, when they will play in the Community Building’s spacious dance hall.

Some local residents may have been unnerved when the weekend population swelled by one thousand fishermen, but most joined the fun of the Fishermen’s Dances, and respected how the fleet contributed to the local economy.
“On Friday nights there was a lot of activity in our small town. All the boats were docked, and the men were glad to be on land. A chance to have a warm bath and shave. Sometimes there were street dances, but usually the men who did not live in Anacortes would congregate in bars or just hang out on the docks. You would often hear the men singing their Croatian songs. Maybe someone would play an accordion.”
- Pat Francin Opia

Nearness to the fishing grounds was a chief advantage in the growth of Anacortes’ fishing industry. This proximity to the resource brought canneries to a dozen sites on the fast-flowing Guemes Channel. Naturally, many fishermen chose Anacortes as their home. Yet Anacortes became the salmon-season haven of the fishing fleet due to active recruitment and infrastructure improvements. Some local residents may have been unnerved when the weekend population swelled by one thousand fishermen, but most joined the fun of the Fishermen’s Dances, and respected how the fleet contributed to the local economy.

“Another thing that was an attraction for everyone in the summertime … they had what they called ‘fishermen dances.’”

-- John Tursi
(Anacortes Museum Oral History)
Free Pavement Dance Friday To Entertain Salmon Boat Crews

A lot of new people are in Anacortes this summer for the salmon fishing. Many boats are tied up here over Saturday for the first time. To make them feel welcome to our city, local merchants looked about for some kind of demonstration and have hit upon a free community pavement dance to be given this Friday night in the Elks Sixth street block.

The following business houses are sponsoring and defraying the expenses of the fishermen's pavement dance: