



Bob Eberle , Marion Hutton and Glenn Miller were here.

## The night a legend touched Southbridge

A musical legend touched Southbridge in 1939, a night when Glenn Miller and his orchestra played "Moonlight Serenade" in canopied draped Town Hall auditorium.

It was two years before the war broke out and Miller and the band came to town in mid-January to play for the annual American Optical Firefighters Ball.

It was a night to remember and there are still many who recall the evening...women in beautiful pastel shaded evening gowns... men in black tuxedos...soft drapes and streamers...the crystal ball casting its magic spell...

It was the social event of the season and certainly, there were couples who fell in love that night.

Although Miller's band had not reached the popularity it was to attain worldwide, the booking by the AO Firefighters was considered to be quite a ploy.

The price for Glenn Miller and the band, including vocalists Marion Hutton and Bob Eberle and featured saxophone star Tex Beneke, was \$450, quite a lot of money for that day.

### 500 couples danced

The Miller entourage arrived from New York City on the morning of Jan. 20 and were housed at the Publick House in Sturbridge.

That night, their touring cars brought them into Southbridge.

When the hour arrived and Miller gave the downbeat for his famous theme, an estimated 500 couples were on the floor....

Some of the songs the Miller band played included *My Reverie*, *Blue Skies*, *King Porter Stomp*, *Poinciana* and *My Blue Heaven*.

Classics like *Elmer's Tune* and *Chattanooga Choo Choo* would come later, when the band would rise to its peak of popularity as America's No. 1 dance band.

The entire Glenn Miller musical career lasted only eight short years. On a day in December, 1944, Miller, then a U.S. Air Force major, was lost on a flight over the English Channel.

He was never to be heard from again.

Today, there are still many who can hang a memory on a Glenn Miller tune—a song that may have been played, the night he and his band came to Southbridge.