



Beginning and the End of..... **Lavaca Courts**

By Brenda Lincke Fisseler



On Tuesday, October 18, 1960, a tornado destroyed the Lavaca Court and the Lavaca Café at the intersection of Hwy 77N and FM 532 around 1:30 in the afternoon.

The twister, that had originated in the Breslau area, The twister obliterated the 10 unit courts, the café and the other buildings on the property owned by Mr. & Mrs. Rudolph Grifno who lived in a house on the court grounds that was completely destroyed by the tornado.

The Lavaca Court were operated by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Kuntz who were both injured along with Mrs. Aggie Blazek, a cook at the café. It was reported that Mrs. Kuntz, while injured, saved her life by crawling under a pool table while the wind collapsed the building. Mr. and Mrs. Griffno were in there house when the tornado hit, but they were uninjured.

The only that remained of the tourist cottages were the foundations while the cottages themselves were torn apart and pieces and furnishings were scatter over the country side.

The first mention of the tourist court was in April 1952 when a newspaper advertisement posted for sale 62 1/2 acres of land with an eight cabin tourist court, café and service station on the premises.

R.H. and Anna Grifno purchased the property on October 29, 1952 from Edwin and Gladys Scheick. The Scheicks were operating the Lavaca Courts prior to the sale to the Grifnos.

*“Great minds are related to
the brief span of time
during which they live
as great buildings are to a
little square in which they
stand...”*

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The Scheicks had purchased the property from Johnnie and Mildred Kovar in December of 1950. An August 1950 newspaper mentions an establishment called the “Kovar’s Place” on the Schulenburg highway.

After the tornado, the Lavaca Tourist Courts and Café were not rebuilt. The only reminder was a sign that read “Lavaca Courts” that remained on the property of many years.

Tourist Court

Tourist court was a common form of lodging for travelers from the 1930s to the 1960s. The term was used to describe stand-alone structures that looked and functioned like small houses.

Unlike earlier accommodations that served mostly railroad passengers, a tourist court existed along roadways to accommodate the needs of the newly motoring public.

Beginning in the 1920’s these tourist courts were being built across the county offering amenities such as heat, electric fans, private bathrooms and kitchens, linens, radios and garages. By the 1940’s and 1950’s these courts were offering telephones, café, gas, air conditioning and swimming pools.

The term “tourist court” dropped out of use by the 1950’s and 1960’s.

Sources:

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/tourist-camps-tourist-courts-and-early-motels-2700/>

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Lavaca County Tribune: 1952 April 11; Oct. 17; Oct. 29; 1960; Oct. 21

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