



a wonderful place to grow up... it was real

A History of the Kollege Kitchen and the Spudnut Shop

— Linda Loudon Wygal and Amy Williams Tenney

Early History

Over one hundred years ago a piece of property was purchased by J. J. Smith, from Laura A. Hamond. The property then passed by inheritance to Maude and James Stonestreet from Mr. Smith. The Stonestreet's leased the College Avenue location to the proprietor of "Pops Place" in 1933 and to S. S. Kirkpatrick, in 1936 to be used as a restaurant, which was named the "Kollege Kitchen" (*WVWC Freshman Guide*). It was located about half way between the Buckhannon City High School and Wesleyan College at 35 College Avenue. It became known as a hangout for the high school students during the day and a rendezvous for college students at night. Nina Fleming took over ownership of the business in October of 1939. Mildred McDonald, who lived with the Flemings at that time, worked as a cook at the restaurant. Arthur Ray also helped to cook and operate the business (*Pharos*, October 4, 1939).

Advertisements were placed in the college newspaper. The students referred to the Kollege Kitchen as "Mom's Kitchen" and operated by "Ma Fleming." The ads also invited students to "come and socialize with your friends after a grueling day of classes and swing to the juke box." The menu specialties were candy, sandwiches, ice cream,

soft drinks, soups, and cigarettes (*Pharos*, October 4, 1939).

In the early 1940s, an article written in "Who's Who in the Senior Class," interviewed students about their favorite hangout. Claudine Lanham McGinley, who was an elementary education major, expressed her "pleasure and joy while working for "Ma Fleming" at the Kollege Kitchen." Andrew Pavlian, another senior that majored in Bible and Philosophy, explained how much he enjoyed the tasty food and the socialization at the restaurant. It was a real-life learning process when he observed the actions and behavior of other students and the local folks that frequented the College Avenue hangout (*Pharos*, March 18, 1943). Other students expressed that they experienced "pure joy and relaxation" when they visited "Mom's Kitchen." The students were deeply saddened when "Ma Fleming" became very ill, during the summer of 1944. A notice was posted in the *Pharos* "Campus Comments," that all the students wished Ma Fleming a speedy recovery. She did not recover, so the Kollege Kitchen was closed (*Pharos*, September 26, 1944).

The Stonestreet's sold the Kollege Kitchen property in 1946 to Fred and Anna Frances Poling. Fred enlarged and remodeled the building. The old entrance was torn out

Hot Dogs and
Dagwood Sandwiches
Our Specialty

The New
Kollege Kitchen

STUDENTS!
Join Your Friends
Here!

(*Pharos*, October 4, 1939)

KOLLEGE KITCHEN

35 College Avenue

SUNDAY DINNERS
SERVED 4:00 - 6:00

65c

(Pharos, February 14, 1946)

preparation. Fred made a deal with Chuck Brown, a WVWC softball player to take over the big task of re-opening the town's favorite hangout. Sunday dinners were served between 4 PM and 6 PM at the price of sixty-five cents per person (Pharos, February 14; May 9, 1946). An article found in the Pharos, "Milling about the Campus," wished "Brownie" the best of luck with his new adventure. The students had really missed the local hangout and hoped that Chuck would keep it going. Yet, they were disappointed when he gave up management of the operation so suddenly. Two of his fellow class mates, Bill Stemple and Joe Douglas took over and seemed to be going strong. Christmas Greetings and good luck for the holidays were offered by Bill and Joe. An advertisement was placed in the Pharos that the Kollege Kitchen was "Buckhannon's only claim to night club fame". When the college year was to close they advertised, "HEY KIDS: This old year is about finished, so MAN the books for your semester exams" and "wishing fellow students a merry vacation or the same to the ones that will spend their time in summer school" (Pharos, December 17, 1946; February 11, 1947).

• CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

and GOOD LUCK for the
HOLIDAYS

KOLLEGE KITCHEN

JOE DOUGLAS

BILL STEMPLER

(Pharos, December 17, 1946)

Buckhannon's Only Claim to Nite Club Fame

KOLLEGE KITCHEN

Where the eleet meet to eat
And beat with the reet feet

and—We're Backing the Bobkittens

JOE DOUGLAS

BILL STEMPLER

(Pharos, February 11, 1947)

with new steps and door replaced. The service area was enlarged with a dance floor built in the upper right-hand corner for those who "yearned to dance with their chosen ones." A bathroom was also installed behind the dance floor. Mr. Poling also improved the kitchen area for healthier food

KOLLEGE KITCHEN

DANCING
SANDWICHES
SOFT DRINKS

Re-Opened
under the management
of
'CHUCK' BROWN

(Pharos, May 9, 1946)

The WVWC campus had housed a variety of cadet training programs during the war years. A project was initiated by the college to convert the old army surplus mess hall into an "on-campus hangout" for the student body. It was completed in the spring of 1947 and opened under the name, the "SCOW". It offered hot dogs and hamburgers, drinks and

snacks, along with a place to smoke and sharpen their skills in the game of bridge. The SCOW soon became the student's favorite place to take a break and "shake loose" between classes without having to leave campus. Of course, attendance continued to drop at the Kollege Kitchen, which caused Joe and Bill to lose interest in their business (Pharos, February 11, 1947).

Lorene George Bailey shared fond memories of the Kollege Kitchen.

Following the war years, several young men and a few women returned to complete college and some even high school. During that period the Kollege Kitchen was under various ownerships. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson took over management after Joe and Bill had given up on the business. The Robinsons decided to do some remodeling to the service area. To the left of the entrance, a counter and a few bar stools were installed. The kitchen was to the left, with a bar type area from which food orders was served. A big jar of dill pickles sat on the service counter. Booths were arranged along the side and the juke box sat between a booth and the kitchen service window. They put three tables and chairs up the middle of the room so there would be more room to play bridge. "Thelma" was the cook while the Robinson's operated the Kollege Kicthen (Lorene Bailey interview).

The bridge tables made it difficult to move about the service area. Lorene had entered the room when she "nudged" Jim Weaver with her book so he would move out of her way.

Mr. Robinson approached her and said, "You're Out of Here" for three days because of immoral behavior. Jim turned around to talk to Mr. Robinson when he hit his glasses by mistake and knocked them off. He told Jim, "You're Out of Here" for three days too. She also remembered a Woods family that operated the Kollege Kitchen during her teen years (Lorene Bailey interview).



Kollege Kitchen on College Avenue
(Photo courtesy of Howard Hiner collection, Daniel Green)

Following in the Family's Footsteps

KOLLEGE KITCHEN

WELCOME ALL STUDENTS

Good Food—Fountain Service

Open Every Night

Mr. and Mrs. Neison S. Curtis

(Pharos, October 8, 1952)

City high school (Pharos, November 20, 1955).

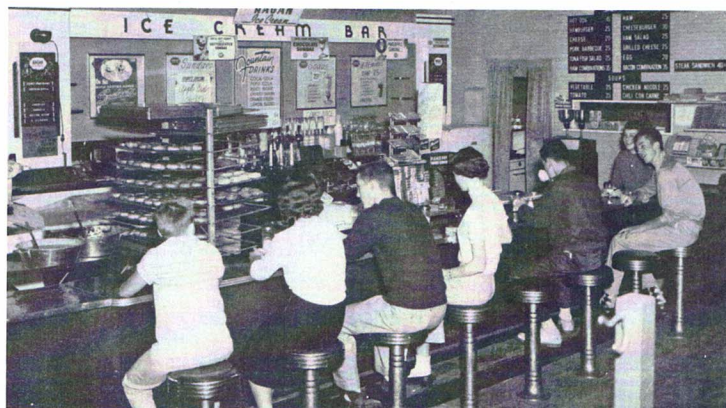
Mr. and Mrs. Curtis, along with their two young daughters, Jerilynn and Linda, invested all their savings to tackle a new business adventure in 1951, which was, of course, already known as the Kollege Kitchen. The small fountain bar soon became known for Mrs. Curtis's real hot dogs, smothered with a special chili sauce and frequently covered with chopped onions. Advertisements were made in the Pharos to "welcome all students" and indicated that they were "open every night" (Pharos, October 8, 1952). It was a struggle for them to make ends meet the first couple of years. They realized that their business needed something new and exciting to offer the public. Lois was scanning through an Argosy magazine when she came across an offer for a "Spudnut" franchise. She thought that would be the answer to something new and different. The company responded to the Curtis' request and asked if they could send out a representative concerning a franchise. The fee for the franchise was \$4,000, which covered the installation of equipment and tools required to operate. It also included an instructor to train the Curtis family—how to mix the batches of dough correctly and the steps of frying. Of course the recipe for Spudnuts was a secret.

The Curtis' learned of a Spudnut Shop that operated in Wheeling. They loaded up their girls, Jerilynn and Linda, and made a trip to visit with the owners of that shop. They were pleased with what they had learned about the product. On their way home, they made the decision to invest their total savings once again in another endeavor—Spudnuts, while they dealt with two young girls with car sickness from the back seat. That new culinary specialty was added to their menu in the fall of 1953, and was an enormous success. The cost for a Spudnut was five cents, cream filled—six cents, and a dozen for fifty-five cents.



(Pharos, October 30, 1953)

In the mid 1930's, Aza Reed, the father of Lois Reed Curtis, operated peanut and snack carts from the corner of Main and Spring Street. Neison Curtis' parents owned and operated the "Lunch Room" across from the



Kollege Kitchen on College Avenue, Neison Curtis (Buckongehanon, 1957)

were so great that Spudnuts were made three times daily, with twenty-five dozen produced each time. Spudnuts were soon advertised in the college newspaper for students to come and get them (Pharos, October 30, 1953; November 30, 1955). The logo was "Like Doughnuts? You'll love Spudnuts." The college students did show up.

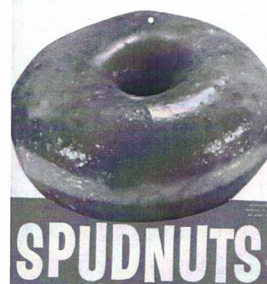
The students nicknamed named Mr. Curtis "Curt." Along with making Spudnuts, Curt did all the deliveries in his Dodge red and white station wagon, not only to the college but all over town. He ran a tight ship when the Kollege Kitchen was packed with high school kids during the day or Wesleyan students at night.



Loaded in the station wagon and ready to go (Photo courtesy of Howard Hiner collection, Daniel Green)

Living quarters for the family were two rooms in the back of the restaurant until 1956, when they moved in with the Curtis grandparents at 17 College Avenue.

In the early part of 1958 they decided on another business adventure. There was a three-story house with four acres and a shop for sale in Tennerton just opposite the new combined B-U High School [the Buckhannon Division and the Tennerton Division combined to make the new Buckhannon-Upshur High School and for the first time all the high school students were together in one facility]. Curt and Lois realized that this was the place to open their new business and for the first time live in a large home of their own. They left the Kollege Kitchen behind and opened the Spudnut Shop. The Grand Opening was scheduled for August 21 and 22, 1958. One cent specials were offered along with free Spudnuts (Buckhannon Record, August 15, 1958).



(Courtesy of the Curtis sisters)

Mrs. Curtis remembered that

... when lunch let out the kids would fly out of the school building and over to the Spudnut Shop to get a coke to go with their lunch. This meant that our shop would be swamped at lunch time.. Over half of the students bought hot lunch, we had to hire students to help with the massive lunch crowds we had to serve. On a slow day the rows of customers would be three and four deep. A half hour before the lunch break, Curt had a big blue canner that he would layer hot dogs, some with chili, or catsup, and some plain. If he would get a special order, he would yell it out and I would fill it. I always made the hamburgers (Buckhannon Record, July 22, 1996).

They had no more than gotten settled into their new shop, when a request came from the college students for pizza. This was something they couldn't get in Upshur County. Mr. and Mrs. Curtis responded to their request and place a phone call to the "George Brothers Restaurant" located in Morgantown. They set a date to meet with Mr. and Mrs. Curtis to teach them the steps of how to prepare the pizza dough, toppings and the baking. They returned home and purchased everything they needed to start serving, and delivering, the first pizza in Upshur County.



Fresh Italian style Pizza was advertised in late September of 1958, ready for service at the Spudnut Shop. A nine-inch cheese pizza cost \$.65 and a twelve-inch pepperoni topped pizza was \$1.10. The shop was open seven days a week and they usually started preparing at 3 a.m. for the hundreds of pizzas served daily. The work load was so overwhelming that they

decided to close on Mondays during the summer months and also to cut back on the daily hours. On their day off, they would leave town before dawn to go fishing and would not return until after dark. As the girls became older the endeavor grew into a family business (Curtis sisters interview).

It was 4:30 a.m., on December 12, 1963, and Ma Curtis and Curt were making their usual trip to the shop. As they started down the front porch steps, Curt collapsed. Ma immediately called for help and went upstairs to tell Linda what was going on and she was to make sure she didn't miss school. Jerilynn was attending her last year at Fairmont State College. After arriving at the hospital, Curt was stabilized. He instructed Ma Curtis that she had to get back to the shop and fill the orders for the college food service and the usual early costumers. Curt didn't want to disappoint their usual customers. A short time later, Jerilynn was with her father when his breathing became

labored and passed away on December 13, 1963 (Curtis sisters interview).

After Curt's death, Ma Curtis continued with the 4:30 a.m. shop routines. Her two daughters helped operate the business until they married. She then continued with the help of employees. Her daughters continuously worried about their mother closing every evening at 11:00 p.m. by herself. For thirty years she carried on the daily routine of the Spudnut Shop that she and her husband had established



Photos above, Ma Curtis and Curt at their Tennerton location

together. Ma Curtis was not only known as the "Spudnut Lady," but she was a great friend to all, a personal counselor, and someone that you could talk to about anything (Curtis sisters interview).

After spending over forty-two years in the restaurant business, Mrs. Curtis hung up her apron in 1993. Ask any one that grew up or visited Upshur County during those days and they could surely tell a story about their experience at the Kollege Kitchen on College Avenue or the Spudnut Shop in Tennerton, across from the high school (Buckhannon Record, July 22, 1996).



(All photos this page courtesy of Howard Hiner collection, Daniel Green)

How to Make Spudnuts and Spuddies, the Process not the Recipe

The preparation for making Spudnuts was not easy or simple. A basic dry mix was prepared at the processing plant located in Cleveland, Ohio. It was shipped in one hundred pound bags at the expense of \$16.50 per bag. A usual basic order was placed for ten bags of mix, along with the required amount of yeast. The yeast would be measured and dissolved in water that was checked with a thermometer to make sure that it was at the correct temperature. It was then poured into the correct measurement of the dry mix. After the dough was mixed, it was rolled out and cut into sections that fit into special pans which were then covered and place on a special stand until it doubled in size. The dough would then be punched down and removed to the proofing table that was covered with a cloth, until it doubled in size again. The dough would then be rolled out with a huge rolling pin to the correct thickness. As Mr. Curtis would cut out a Spudnut he would flip it onto his thumb, which held five or six. He would then transport them onto a special cloth type pan, slide them onto a shelf of a big cabinet like container until it doubled in size again. Then the fryer was prepared for frying which had to be a certain temperature. The cutout dough was placed on a wire rack with handles that was lowered down in the oil. A long stick type tool was used to separate and

turn the Spudnuts. It was also used to remove each Spudnut from the oil and placed on a dripping rack. They were immediately glazed or frosted and placed on drying racks. These racks were then fitted onto a big stand which held several racks. On a good day, they could produce at least two hundred dozen Spudnuts and Spuddies. They resembled doughnuts in shape but they had a distinctive taste and texture which was due to the mix base of potato flour.

The glaze was kept in an electric mixer type container and when the glaze got a little stiff, some water would be mixed in to make it smooth as it heated. The frosting was made in big tubs with handles that would fit in the refrigerator until needed.

Spuddies, being cake like, were mixed in a metal container that had a handle on it to drop the dough out into the oil. The frying and curing methods were the same as the ones used on the Spudnuts. Yum!



(Courtesy of the Curtis sisters)



The information for this review was gathered mostly from interviews with the Curtis sisters, Jerilynn Thorn (left) and Linda Burroughs (right), interviewer, Linda Wygal (center).

If you have a story about the Kollege Kitchen or the Spudnut Shop that you would like to share, please contact the Upshur County Historic Society.

(staff photo)

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