



# THE KENT HISTORIAN

Newsletter of the Kent Historical Society

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Number 66

## HISTORY FEATURE

### Cool Ice Cream Treats Sweeten Warm Summer Days in Kent

On Main Street in Kent, Charles Young Sr. was making his own ice cream at Young's Pharmacy, which he later sold to Eddie Hoard. Jean Jacobs remembers going there after school in the 1940s for the chocolate cookies served with the ice cream. This site was part of the building complex (known as the Kent Block and built in 1837) destroyed by fire in the 1972.

In 1938, Charles Young Sr. bought a majority interest in Thompson's Drug Store from Hale B. Thompson

cream Christmas tree or Easter bunny that had been extruded through the center of a brick of vanilla ice cream. Every guest at a holiday dinner could enjoy the design in their slice.

Francis Griebing Chastain, another former employee, recalled certain businessmen, perhaps from the Davey Tree Expert Company of-fices on the floor above. They always ordered their idea of a nutritious lunch: a malted with an egg beaten into it. Customers could buy cardboard containers of "hand-packed" or "read-packed" with a little wire handle over the top. Hand-packed ice cream was harder and more expensive because more ice cream could be jammed in. Ready-packed was fluffier and less expensive because more air was mixed in.

Chastain and the other soda jerks were not forbidden to partake of the treats; but when they did, it was just a few spoons of ice cream with a dab of butterscotch or hot-fudge sauce. They were usually too busy or embarrassed to eat more. Chastain earned 37 1/2 cents per hour and thought herself lucky to earn this amount and get to see her friends from high school coming in. Thompson's Drug Store became a local hangout with the addition of booths in the back of the store. Some young people never seemed to go home. The booths became crowded, noisy and messy. Young, the owner, would get irritated and frown a lot. He finally moved the whole soda fountain to the center aisle of the store with stools on each side.

In 1950, Jim Myers began working at Thompson's to see if he would like the field of pharmacy. After graduating from Ohio Northern School of Pharmacy in 1954, he came to work at Thompson's and started at the soda fountain. That made him a soda jerk, and he remained with Thompson's until its closing on January 2, 2004.

Another popular spot for ice cream was Isaly's at 716 S. Water St. inside Hahn's Bakery. Kay Burgess, whose family owned Hahn's related that because bakery sales fell during the depression, they added an Isaly's. She recalled the special skyscraper cone, which had to be filled using a long cone-shaped scoop. Isaly's offered 32 flavors.

Kay Burgess remembers that the ice cream also was sold "handpacked and as prepacked bricks. Burgess remembers that Klondikes were a favorite because "if you got one with a pink center, you got another one free." Cones and Klondikes were 5 cents, and every Sunday there was a long line of customers. "There were 12 to 15 high school employees behind the counter making cones—you could hold up to six in one hand." A fire destroyed Hahn's in 1973. Bur-

See ICE CREAM, p. 3.



Thompson's Drug Store soda fountain.

with whom he had interned while at Western Reserve University. Another partner was Merrill Thompson, not related to Hale. According to Kathy Lilley, Young's daughter, their ice cream was "the best in town." Her father now used Telling-Belle Vernon ice cream, a product so good he no longer needed to make his own. She served "counter meals" of milk shakes or sundaes with pretzels for 25 cents, cones for 5 cents or 10 cents and Coca-Cola with cherry, lime, or chocolate syrup to make ice cream sodas.

Lilley recalls a special feature sold at holidays: A small, colored ice

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# A Tribute to William Birkner

## March 25, 1927-March 9, 2009

Members of the board and volunteers and friends of the Kent Historical Society would like to extend condolences to William's wife Carol, his children, grandchildren and the many members of his extended family.

Founding member, past president (1981-1995) and director of the Kent Historical Society's Row Museum, Birkner was born in Kent to Hugo E.



William Birkner

and May Louise (Richards) Birkner. After serving in the Navy during World War II he returned to Kent and graduated from Kent State University. He was employed in industry for 21 years (Davey Tree, Goodyear and Morgan Adhesives). He retired in 1989 from Field Local Schools, where he taught industrial arts for 18 years.

Birkner's important role in the development of the Historical Society may have been best described by another founding member, Loris Troyer. These words, taken from an article for the society's July 1989 newsletter are as true today as they were 20 years ago: "The Kent Histori-

cal Society was organized and incorporated in 1971. Concerned that several of Kent's historical buildings and sites faced demolition, particularly the 1875 downtown railroad depot, jeweler Sam Apicello called a meeting of seven business and community leaders to consider the establishment of a society to work toward their preservation. Apicello was elected temporary chairman and later president. Besides Apicello, the original group of organizers, and then trustees were teacher Bill Birkner, insurance executive Reed Strimple, pharmacist Jim Myers, Mayor John Carson, attorney Titus Jackman and editor Loris Troyer [banker Leland Keller, another original trustee, joined later]. . . .

"Bill Birkner (who became President on November 11, 1973) was a virtual one-man director of the renovation effort. He spent many hours of on-

hands labor, an effort the community recognized in 1982 when he was awarded the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Public Service Medal. The depot's central tower is named in his honor."

Birkner worked at building an historical society and collecting its earliest artifacts and helping to raise money and awareness about the importance of preserving the history of the Kent community. On March 14, 2009, the Historical Society Board of Trustees voted unanimously to create the "William Birkner Tower Preservation Fund." All of the donations to this fund will continue Birkner's mission of saving the beloved depot.

## Kent Historical Society

THE KENT HISTORIAN is a quarterly publication of the Kent Historical Society, a nonprofit organization that strives to be the primary Kent history resource and reference center, leading the community in the collection, preservation and interpretation of Kent's heritage through exhibitions, educational programs and activities. The society brings educational programs to schools, businesses and civic organizations and collaborates with the Main Street Kent and other historic preservation projects in the community.

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### Museum Hours

Thursday: 11 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Friday: 11 a.m.-3 p.m.  
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 Groups and special tours  
 by appointment

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### Tickets for Garden Tours Still Available for June, July

Tickets for the Kent Historical Society's garden tours are still available. The tickets allow you to view 10 beautiful Kent-area gardens slated for touring on June 27 and July 11. One \$15 ticket is good for both dates. The self-guided tours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The gardens range from creative use of a small city lot to sprawling naturalized acres featuring a lake surrounded by a walking path. Tickets for the KHS fund-raiser are \$15. They can be purchased at the KHS office, 234 S. Water St.; Sue Nelson Designs, 156 S. Water St.; and Home Savings Bank, 142 N. Water St. Tickets also may be purchased in Ravenna at Home Savings Bank, 100 E. Main St.; and in Brimfield at Home Savings Bank, 4023 S.R. 43. For additional information, call 330-678-2712 or 330-678-5671.

## ICE CREAM

Continued from p. 1

gress' family also owned the Brady from 1969 to 1985. A Cleveland company provided ice cream there.

Burgess also remembers the Cardinal, located next to the theatre at the corner of Main and DePeyster streets, selling ice cream. The Cottage on the south side of Main Street halfway be-



Stoddard's Frozen Custard in 1948.

tween DePeyster and Water streets sold ice cream as did the Perfection Dairy on Gouglar Avenue near the present Dale Adams building. Also, Mrs. Van Allen had a confectionary store on North Mantua Street and may have had ice cream, though Kay isn't sure. She does remember, however, that most of the stores had fountains where you mixed carbonated water with flavors to make ice cream sodas and fountain drinks—Coca-Cola, root beer and other soft drinks that were all concentrated syrups that came in gallon bottles. "The most fun was making banana splits with a split banana, three scoops of ice cream

[and] three toppings: whipped cream, chopped nuts and a cherry"

Stoddard's Frozen Custard opened in 1947 just up from the present Huntington Bank building. After one year, the small building was literally lifted and moved to its present location on West Main Street because business had grown so much. Lea and Lyle Stoddard rented the new site from Redmond Greer for 19 years. In 1967, they sold it to Daniel Kaye Sr., who died in 1983 in a tractor accident. The business was inherited by Lisa, Tracey and Daniel Jr.

The business continues to be family owned and operated.

The custard is still made with machines that were manufactured in the 1940s. Once turned on, the machines run continuously and must be watched while making the mixture of milk and butterfat into frozen custard. During the process, the custard absorbs about half as much air as frozen custard made on a standard frozen-custard machine. Besides chocolate and vanilla, Stoddard's offers a variety of other flavors as their flavor of the day posted on the message-board pole sign in front of the building.

*Note: This article was researched and written by Jean Giulitto.*

### Ice Cream Scoops



In 1920, Harry Burt, a Youngstown, Ohio, candy maker, created a special treat called the Jolly Boy Sucker, a lollipop on a stick. That same year, while working in his ice cream parlor, Burt created a smooth chocolate coating that was compatible with ice cream. It tasted great, but the new combination was too messy to eat. As a solution, Burt's son, Harry Jr., suggested freezing the wooden sticks, used for Jolly Boy Suckers, into the ice cream. It worked!

In 1774, a caterer named Phillip Lenzi announced in a New York newspaper that he had just arrived from London and would be offering for sale various confections, including ice cream. Dolley Madison, wife of U.S. President James Madison, served ice cream at her husband's Inaugural Ball in 1813.

*Source: The History of Ice Cream, written by the International Association of Ice Cream Manufacturers (IAICM), Washington D.C., 1978, and [www.icecreamusa.com](http://www.icecreamusa.com).*

## Save the Date . . .

Every year hundreds of people visit the Kent Historical Society museum and gift shop as part of the annual Kent Heritage Festival to mark the July 4 holiday.

This year, the all-day festival will on Saturday, July 4. Volunteers will be helping visitors discover the joys of the Historical Society's artifacts collection from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Children will be able to play with Thomas the Train, see the HO scale model of early Kent built by John Wunderle. Other museum attractions include the Haymaker quilt and a letter sent from postmaster George DePeyster. Merchandise (including a picture post card and a train hat) will be available for purchase. Be sure to stop by.

## KHS Volunteers in the Spotlight

Volunteers in the spotlight for the summer are Holly Frazier (left) and Chris Metesh (right).



*Holly:* "I love the idea that history is being preserved, documented, and presented so a new generation can learn where it came from. I love being a part of Kent's history, even if it means only admiring it instead of leaving a legacy of great accomplishments. I just love being there!"

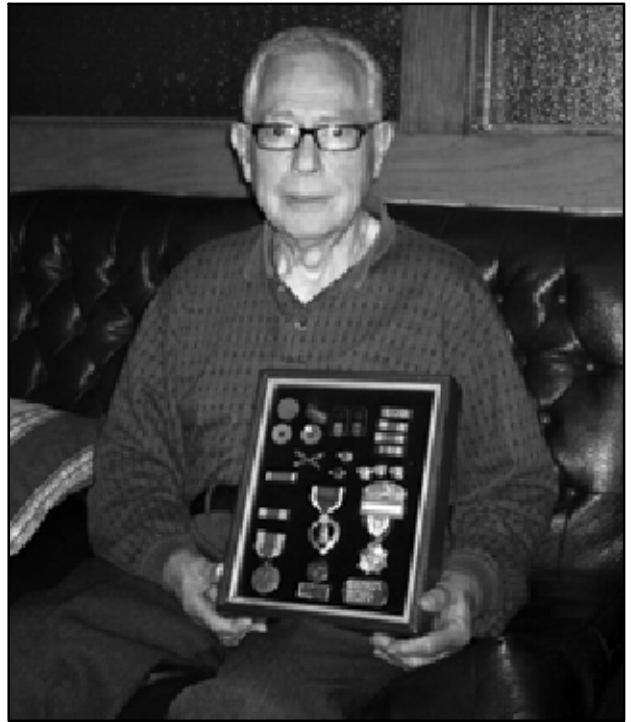
*Chris:* "The Kent Historical Society is such an amazing asset to the community of Kent, and I think it's a priceless opportunity to learn how to present history to the public, especially to kids and teenagers (which is what I'll be doing as an educator after college). It's a treasure trove of knowledge here, just waiting to be discovered!"

## World War II Veterans Add Their Stories to Oral History Project

Nearly a dozen oral histories from World War II veterans from the Kent community will become part of the Historical Society's oral history collection.

Tom Fowler, a KHS student intern from the History Department, has been conducting interviews with veterans about their wartime experiences as well as their memories of Kent. At right, Steve Messino displays the medals he was awarded for his military service during World War II.

Also needed are interviews of women who remained at "home" during the war years and have memories of what life was like at home or at their workplace or while a relative, friend or spouse was serving. If you would like to contribute an oral history, call Mary Ann Green at 330-678-2712 to schedule one at your home or in the Visitors Center.



Steve Messino

### In Memoriam: Russell Green (1950-2009)



The Kent Historical Society Board and the members of the KHS family extend their deepest sympathy to the society's administrator, Mary Ann Green, on the recent loss of her husband of 19 years, Russell Green (1950-2009). Russell was a great supporter of the society, and he will be missed.



### Correction . . .

The last issue of *The Kent Historian* was incorrectly labeled as "Summer 2009." It should have been labeled "Spring 2009." The Kent Historical Society regrets the error.



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