

**DISCOVERING THE DISTRICT:
A Look at the History of Downtown Columbia**

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Our project began in late January 2009. We took a walk through the streets of downtown Columbia admiring each building and wondering what stories they had to tell. After much consideration, we chose the Tiger Hotel, the Missouri Theatre, and Booches. We felt these buildings not only contained a social significance, but also a cultural history that we were unaware of until now.

Before we began this project, we had only seen these buildings in passing. We spent many afternoons sifting through photographs and newspaper articles at the archives. We realized that these buildings each have a longstanding and rich history that makes up The District.

As you read this documentary, we hope you enjoy the stories that these buildings have to tell. They are visions of successes, failures, and the people who witnessed it all. We believe that these stories will inspire you to learn more about the community you live in, whether you live in Columbia or elsewhere.

THE TIGER HOTEL: A LOOK BACK TO 1928...

Colleen Kelly

In 1928, women wearing bright dresses, silk stockings in every color of the rainbow, and bobbed hair could be seen strolling down 8th street next to men wearing Panamas hats and buttoned waistcoats. They were well on their way to an elite party celebrating the opening day of the newly erected Tiger Hotel. This was the hotel that people had never before even dreamed about. This nine-story building was proof that Columbia was soon to become an “up-to-date little city,” lauded businessmen. James Garth, a hotel resident in 1977, was among the partygoers. This was “quite the party,” he announced, and recalled that bootleg whiskey abounded because Prohibition laws had just started up. And he was among the spectators when a car pulled up right to the steps—this was Mr. Sweet, the head of the chain that managed the Tiger Hotel. The crowd swarmed to gather around Mr. Sweet and cheered for this monumental moment in Columbia history.

Designed by architect Alonzo Gentry of Kansas City, the hotel was the social hotspot for the University and downtown Columbia. Football fans

from across the country booked rooms years in advance to stay at the hotel during the height of the Tiger football season. Also called the “Tiger Columns,” the Tiger Hotel received its shining touch in October of 1929: a new red Neon sign, thirteen feet, eight inches long, and weighing in at a 400 pounds, was hung vertically over the doorway. This was Columbia’s Tiger Hotel.

Who knows what the skyline of downtown Columbia would have looked like had The Tiger not battled it out with the Missouri Theatre for hotel rights?

Reportedly, the Missouri Theatre, which was built in 1927, was originally designed to include a high-rise hotel above the actual theatre, but owners of the then-under-construction Tiger Hotel voiced major concerns with two major hotels staying afloat so near in proximity in a town that was still developing.



But the hotel's glory days didn't last long. Unfortunately, Columbia was not immune from the Great Depression, and the grand, majestic hotel became a "flophouse," providing inexpensive housing for transient workers. There simply was not enough money being made in the hotel industry. Traces of partitions in the basement of the hotel can still be seen where small, cell-like rooms only included a bed and sink.

PROGRESS, IMPROVEMENTS, and HISTORY LIVED

Throughout the years, the hotel has been home to thousands of people who have come and gone from Columbia—or who have stayed and lived here most of their lives.

Remember Rose Wilder from the *Little House on the Prairie* series you loved to read as a kid? I was delighted to find out that she helped her mother, Laura Ingalls Wilder, the main writer of the series, research the books as well as pen many of her own books, right here in Columbia—right in the Tiger Hotel in 1935. Rose had an offer from the McBride Publishing Company to write a volume on a series on Missouri. Deciding she needed the use of a

good research library, she drove the 170 miles to Columbia to live for the next two years and installed herself in the Tiger Hotel. Week after week, Rose Wilder sat in her hotel room-made-into-office pouring over her childhood memories of life in Missouri, recalling all the small details that seem to get lost in the whirlwind of time. She bought a secondhand Ford to make trips around the state to gather material for her book. Just a short walk away from the State Historical Society at the University of Missouri, she checked her history often and made sure it was correct in her mind. And letter after letter was sent to her Laura asking for corrections on details and filing her family in on the news in Columbia, births and deaths and the average happenings of a small Midwest town.



Years later, the hotel would be sold and a man named Mr. Louis Shelburne would sit in his corner apartment in the hotel, tending to management and making sure the hotel stayed "nice and quiet" for his guests. The 1969 Army football team wanted a minimum of distractions. The Tiger put them on an

“upper floor, away from street noises and other guests.” And safety precautions were taken, putting police on duty at the hotel 24 hours a day.

Mr. Shelburne even made sure the basketball teams, who are taller than the average hotel guest, had extra large beds—six inches longer than most standard beds. After all, this was not a standard hotel.

Through an arrangement with Stephens College, also in 1969, the [at this time called] Tiger Motor Hotel housed almost 50 girls from the college during the fall semester. Because of the greater total enrollment at Stephens, some of the later registrants had to live at the hotel, mostly freshmen. The Tiger redecorated two floors for the girls and cut them off from the rest of the hotel. Not only was it used for the dormitory overflow, but because of space issues, the upper floor was turned into the student health center.

And if you rode the elevator at the Tiger at this time, you might find yourself stepping into a car with a four-legged animal named Taffy standing next to you, waiting to get off at the fourth floor to head home for the night. Belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Shelburne, Taffy the cocker-spaniel had no problem fitting in with other guests—she could find her way

home with no help, though sometimes, said Mr. Shelburne, it just took her a little longer—she sometimes would get stuck in the elevator. This had been her routine for almost 12 years.

In a 1976 *Missourian* article, Mrs. Shelburne said that Taffy was also an efficient errand runner, winning the Distinguished Pet of the Year Award from the Humane Society: “When I used to smoke, I would call down to the desk for a pack, put Taffy on the elevator and she would come back with the cigarettes in her mouth. I really think she understands the English language.” And apparently, she liked her schedule too: “She rides the elevator down by herself at 7am and then comes right up for her hard-boiled egg and milk. Then she has her nap. At noon I send her down and not for any reason will she come back up. She likes to greet everyone and have a good time. She will sit by anyone in the lobby, even if she doesn’t know him. If he won’t notice her, it hurts her feelings.” She led a true dog’s life, ‘ruffing’ it in her hotel-made-castle.

Even the employees at the Tiger Hotel add to the variety of people who went in and out its doors over the years. Deane McClellan’s career in the hotel industry began in 1942 at the Pennant Hotel and a few years later became the first female clerk to work

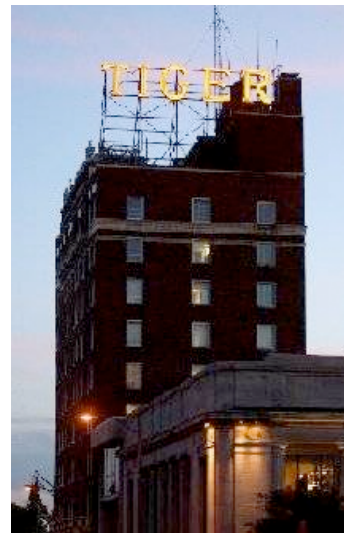
the Tiger Hotel's front desk. Eventually, she had said, her male co-workers accepted the idea of working with a female. Shelburne nominated her for the Missouri Hotel and Motel Association Employee of the Year, an award she won with flying colors. Lauded as "regular as the famous Big Ben clock" and called Dick Tracy because nothing escaped her eagle eye, McClellan always showed up at her appointed time, come rain, snow, sleet, or hail, not missing a day of work except for a death in the family for 22 ½ years. A widow, McClellan said that she worked because she wouldn't be happy staying home—she'd be "lost doing something else," and was always ready to be back at work Monday morning. The award, she said, wouldn't change her life—she didn't think about retiring until she had to.

In 1983, the hotel was bought by Ray Braudis, a Columbia investment counselor who was a general manager for Tiger Investments. He planned to refurbish the then 53-year-old hotel. He put in a public bar and a private club overlooking the city and hoped to make the energy-draining hotel more efficient. The "Glass Tiger," the new lounge was called, offered more than a nice view: live jazz entertainment, seating 62 people with tables scattered throughout the room, made business even better than they had anticipated. But even these renovations didn't do what he had hoped: to make

the hotel the gateway to the University. Hotel business was down and there simply wasn't enough to keep it going.

THE TIGER HOTEL TODAY...

Noted on the front of the Tiger Hotel building as a National Historic Property, hundreds walk by it daily without taking a second glance at what was once an icon of the town. A towering building over downtown Columbia, it now sits nearly vacant, with the exception of the occasional visitor or catering event on the first floor.



But recently, there has been talk of restoring the hotel to its former glory. Tiger Hotel owners John Ott, Dave Baugher, and Al Germond bought the hotel back in 2003 with plans to renovate—but they are asking the city for help. They applied for tax-increment financing (TIF) on February 10, which would give them a \$1.7 million dollar tax break. It would

invest the property taxes from the building site back into the project. This money would enable them to renovate seven of its ten floors into hotel rooms.

But this tax-increment financing that the hotel is requesting has become a controversial topic to many Columbians. They have good reason for their fears.

The Tiger Hotel has received state historic funding in the past, but no return has come out of it. Many fear that John Ott and other owners are not in it to add to the downtown sector, but to make a bigger buck. Their past "improvements," they say, have actually done the city more harm than good, and they haven't made good choices for the local business owners who are trying to stay afloat downtown.

Many Columbians do not agree with the huge chunk of money that the city has been asked to grant them with. What if the renovations will simply need to be "re-renovated" within a couple years? Can the Tiger, structurally, stand up to be what it once was? Before the hotel opened for senior-living, \$4.5 million was spent on the restoration process, money that was taken from historical funds. But despite this huge chunk of change, it was unsuccessful and still needs more to renovate nine

A CLOSER LOOK AT TAX-INCREMENT FINANCING

The tax-increment financing ordinance was passed to further the economy and pay for infrastructure improvement throughout Columbia. Assistant City Manager Tony St. Romaine views it as a way for "development to help pay for itself." Fragile water mains downtown, improving streets and sidewalks, and keeping up with parking garages are all projects that would benefit from the ordinance.

TIF has become a progressively more popular development tool across Missouri, especially in Kansas City's new Power & Light district, an area that until recently lay economically dormant. It has possibilities of refurbishing vicinities that need major restoration.

In order to qualify for these tax incentives, the Commission must determine that the project at hand is eligible by these three items:

- 1.** A property must be in an area that is considered "blighted" and in need of conservation, defined generally as an area that "constitutes an economic or social liability or a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare."
- 2.** The owners must prove that their project will be of significant benefit to the community, bringing in jobs and economic improvements.
- 3.** The renovations would in no way be able to be completed without the public assistance

of the ten floors in order to be a successful hotel. The improvements that need to be made for the hotel to be up and running again at full-capacity are many, and few believe it will really be worth it—especially considering the loss to the school district and library. All of the money that would be slated for them from property taxes would now be going straight to the Tiger Hotel. One opponent said, “I want TIF financing for my *home* if John Ott is going to get it to waste on the Tiger Hotel!” Others don’t think the city should be the “lender of last resort.”

But John Ott seems to think otherwise: he believes that restoring a “boutique hotel” to the District will bring in jobs and encourage people to spend more time downtown, and he sees the TIF as the only way to accomplish this.

Is this an investment that's worth it, especially from public funds? Is the history of the hotel enough to surpass the qualms against TIF? The issue is still being

discussed and has yet to be decided on, but it will be interesting to find out the final decision the city will make. The Tiger Hotel could one day be restored to a modern-day version of what it once was, an icon of downtown Columbia, or it could flounder under conditions that simply do not make it possible for the hotel to once again be a hotel, giving its history an end.

THE MISSOURI THEATRE

Megan Rau

Over three hundred Columbia residents filled the Missouri Theatre on the evening of October 5, 1928. The night resembled a typical Hollywood movie premiere today; red carpets embroidered with the letter "M" were rolled out to usher in excited attendees. The audience happily applauded the Missouri Orchestra as they played organ and piano music. To complete the evening, a performance from The Missouri Rockets, who later became the Radio City Rockettes, danced with Bob Hope. The following day, telegrams flooded the theater office, and actors such as John Barrymore, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Gloria Swanson congratulated the theater on a successful night. The opening marked the beginning of the theater's legacy, not only as a historical structure, but also an artistic masterpiece.

BACKGROUND

Designed by the Boller Brothers Architects of Kansas City in 1928, the theater resembles both rococo and baroque elements of the Louis XIV and XV periods. It holds a spot on the

National Register of Historic Places list, and much of its elaborate detailing still exists today. When visitors enter the theater, they will still see the Belgian marble wainscoting, plaster reliefs, and the stained glass arts panels under the balcony. An 1800 pound Italian chandelier, made with crystal and etched glass panels, still dangles from the ceiling. The Missouri Theater remains the only pre-depression era movie palace and vaudeville stage in central Missouri.

HISTORY

In the beginning, the theater created somewhat of a challenge for its owners. Because of its enormous size and aesthetically pleasing style, the owners struggled to maintain its respected appearance. After vaudeville died out in the late 1940s, the theater became strictly a film house. In 1953, a change in ownership led Commonwealth Theaters, Inc. to operate the theater. Commonwealth wanted to modernize the theater, making significant changes to the lobby and mezzanine areas.

The theater became the center of entertainment for Columbia's residents. Twenty-five cents bought adults a ticket to a film, and children could attend for ten cents. The palace, as the theater was called, became a place where people of all classes could enjoy a movie on the forty-two feet wide screen, but beneath the theater's attractive appearance laid one setback: segregation.

Blacks purchased their tickets at the box office, but were forced to walk around to the back of the building, where they could then enter the theater. They were allowed to only sit in the balcony, and they had to climb six flights of stairs before they could take their seats. Ropes separated African-Americans from whites; the theater owners intended for the palace to run this way. Taking the stairs insulted the African-American community. They felt like they were being imprisoned, and because of this, many African-American refused to attend the theater once they reached adulthood. Despite the unhappiness of some patrons, others learned to accept that segregation wasn't going anywhere.

Racial segregation continued until 1964, when Columbia passed a law that accommodated individuals of all races to sit together in the theater. Blacks no longer had to climb the stairs to reach

their seats. The community felt more welcome after the laws were passed. The Missouri Theatre continued to uphold its role as the palace of central Missouri, but in the 1980s, it experienced a drastic transformation, both in audience and ownership.

The 1980s proved to be a decade of changes for the Missouri Theatre. Gone were the days of families flocking to the theater for a matinee film. Instead, residents found a comfortable spot in the newer, less sophisticated multi-plex theaters. With the addition of new theaters, the Missouri Theatre began to struggle financially. By the early 1980s, both the Hall and Varsity theaters closed, and the Uptown Theater was sold to an office developer. In 1982, a group of Columbia residents persuaded Commonwealth Theaters from altering the Missouri Theatre from a single theater to a triplex, or three "shoebox" cinemas. Residents didn't want modernization to occur; they wanted to preserve the beauty of the theater.

When Columbia residents heard of the vital modifications that were being considered, they could only do one thing: hold a rally. They didn't want the only theater in Columbia to be completely altered, so they planned the riot, which was held outside of the theater on Friday, April 2, 1982. Over 80 people attended the rally, and with some

persuasion from the owners, the riot ended peacefully. The talk of altering the theater seemed to cease, but crucial modifications would soon change the theater completely.

Hugo Vianello, director and conductor for the Missouri Symphony Society, began his association with the Missouri Theatre in 1986, when the Society proposed a plan to purchase the theater from Commonwealth. The Missouri Symphony Society, a not-for-profit music organization, wanted to convert

the theater into a performance hall, and in 1987, Vianello became the primary caretaker of the Missouri Theatre. After seventeen years without a place to perform, the Missouri Symphony Society's wish came true.



The "Night of Nostalgia," the first concert in the newly-operated theater, took place in 1988. The Missouri Symphony Society chose to remove the movie screen to ensure enough space for many orchestral performances.

The Missouri Theatre became home to the Missouri Symphony Society in 1987. Despite doubts of many Columbia residents, the theater was successfully transformed into a performance hall.

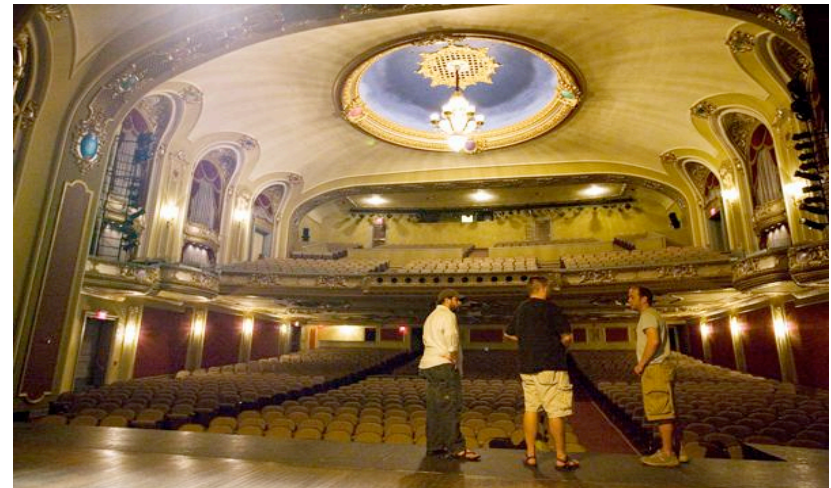


TODAY'S THEATRE

The transformation caused doubts among many of Columbia's residents. The Missouri Symphony Society Performing Arts Center Chamber Orchestra, or MOSSPAC, agreed to raise money to make the changes to the theater, in addition to the state loans they received after purchasing the building. In 1992, the Missouri Symphony Society received their first National Endowment for the Arts grant, and two years later, an architectural plan for the historic restoration of the theater was introduced. Almost ten years later, in 2002, the Missouri Symphony Society began to convert the theater into the Missouri Theatre Center for the Arts. During the same year, the Missouri Symphony Society's Children's Choir was created, giving the children of Columbia an artistic outlet within in the community.

Restoration of the theater began on July 28, 2007, and the final project was finished in 2008. Executive Director David A. White and the Missouri Symphony Society established the Missouri Symphony Conservatory, consisting of music and theatre training programs for children and young adults. Today, the theater represents the Missouri Symphony

Society, but it also embodies decades of changes, from a vaudeville and movie house in the 1920s to a current symphony performance center. Through each modification, the residents of Columbia have been part of the process. From racism to riots, Columbians have been impacted. The Missouri Theatre still continues to represent artistic values, and its structure, though different today, remains an aesthetic masterpiece.



The Missouri Theatre provides a venue for a variety of artistic performances, from summer music festivals to dance performances from the Missouri Contemporary Ballet Company

BOOCHE'S

Julie Miller

If you're like me, perhaps you have lived in Columbia for a while and have at least heard of Booche's. It's one of those unique businesses that make downtown Columbia so appealing. You're sure that it's filled with history and that there's a good reason it's been around for so long. You've probably even promised yourself that you'd eat there before your time in Columbia is up, but what holds you back? Is all of that history a bit too intimidating? Is Booche's more of a "permanent resident" hangout? For the last four years when I would walk downtown I would pass by Booche's and be intrigued by the hanging Budweiser paraphernalia and the old, mirrored bar that I could see from outside the windows. Usually there would be someone flipping hamburgers right by the window, and the sweet aroma of grilled meat made it all seem delicious, but for some reason I'd always just pass by the cozy looking burger joint and tell myself, "some other time". It wasn't until I started doing some research that instead of just assuming that there was history in Booche's, I began to know some of the history of Booche's. Besides doing archival research, I was able to learn about a couple of people's personal experiences at

Booche's through interviews, particularly Brian Heffernan's.



BRIAN HEFFERNAN

Getting the loyal of Booche's to do interviews is trickier than it may seem. The owners refuse to give interviews due to past miscommunications, and their longstanding customers, who also happen to be

good friends with the owners, stand behind this policy as well. So I was happy to find out that Brian was willing to talk with me about his experiences at Booche's. "One of my first visits up here was when I was in high school," he recalled as he sat across from me at a table in Memorial Union. He had taken a break from his pile of books that he had pushed to the side to talk with me about Booche's, Brian completed his undergraduate degree in journalism at the University of Missouri in May 2008 and began his graduate work in journalism in January 2009. "My sister went up here and I came to visit with some of my friends and Booche's was one of the places I remember that we went," he continued, "It was the first time I'd ever had the burgers and they were awesome, I remember that. I also remember some kind of blunder when I was like, 'where's the menu?' and they were like, 'Yeah it's on the wall, idiot'. They didn't' actually say that, but they were like, 'yeah it's over there.' It's just like an accepted thing that people know who go there not to ask for the menu."

Despite the small "menu blunder", his high school visit to Booche's did have an impact on Brian when he returned to Mizzou as an undergraduate freshman. "At the time I came back I was in this band called Johnny O and the Jerks and me and one of the other guys in the band had an obsession with like Rockabilly, and you know, like greaser stuff

and we were like, 'man, we're going to like eat at Booche's all the time and play pool and stuff.' So yeah, the initial plan was to go there all the time, but that didn't end up happening as much." Since his freshman year in college Brian would say that conservatively he has eaten at Booche's around twenty five times which is a decent amount of times for a college student to eat out at one particular restaurant.

MEET "BOOCH"

Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Venable moved to Columbia Missouri when their son, Paul Venable was just a baby. Paul was one of three sons; the other two were named Kenneth and George. While Kenneth would move out of Columbia and George would open up a music studio with his wife, Paul would spend the rest of his forty-six years as a successful and congenial businessman in Columbia. In 1884 Paul "Booch" Venable would open up a billiard's bar that would later be hailed "by many to be the finest hall outside St. Louis and Kansas City". When Booche's first opened in 1884 it was located on the "northeast corner of Broadway and North Tenth Street". There is very little documentation concerning this time period of Booche's, but it can be assumed that for

the twenty seven years that Booche's remained at the corner of Broadway and Tenth business was good because in 1911 the store relocated to the second floor of the Virginia Building on South Ninth Street.

On September 11, 1911 Booche's had a grand opening party for their new Virginia Building location. Though women had never been permitted inside Booche's before (and wouldn't be until the 1970s), they were invited to the event. A newspaper clipping from the next day observed that, "No playing was permitted but the visitors were permitted to inspect everything in the hall". Perhaps the opening party was a chance for the women to be at ease as to what was inside the "old boy's club" as much as it was an opportunity for the guys to get excited about the twelve Circassian Walnut tables placed strategically throughout the hall. Another perk to the new location? A barbershop. Booche's Barber Shop was owned by J.C. Green and was located right next to the bar. After having a burger and a beer a guy could even get a shave. The next day after the grand opening the first game was held and played between Paul Venable's father, F.B., and Mr. W.W. Dailey.

It was just a year after Booche's opening at the Virginia Building that Paul Venable would die in the

Jewish Hospital in St. Louis after an operation on his gall stones. His tragic and untimely death would create a stir in the Columbia community. His friends and regulars knew Paul as Booch. He had an excellent reputation with the University. His pool hall "was always conducted in a manner that was approved of by the University authorities, was headquarters for all students who were interested in athletics or other affairs". Throughout my research I found that Booch had good ties with the University and the students. One obituary remembers the time in November 1908 when Venable went to Des Moines with the Mizzou football team to watch the Missouri-Iowa game. He went decked out in his Mizzou apparel wearing gold and black from head to toe and when he stopped at a restaurant to get a cup of coffee he was refused service because the Iowa football coach had ordered that Missouri fans not be served coffee.

After reading how close Booch seemed to be with students at the University, I began to wonder if there was still a strong student following at Booche's now. I asked Brian if he thought the atmosphere at Booche's was more for college students or people in the community. "I would say people from the community maybe," he responded, "but that college people still come in. But if you want to ask, 'is it a college place or a community place,' I would

put it as a community place because people are in there all during the year whether it's going to be summer or the first weekend of school. Families go in there when they come in town maybe because they went there when they were younger, you know. I would say it's more of a community place, but they welcome college people in."

Even though college students are certainly welcomed at Booche's, the bar isn't your typical college kid scene. "It's not necessarily like a college bar, you know," Brian said, "Like right down the street you have places that you can get burgers like Big 12, or Heidelberg, or Harpo's, and even though a lot of college people go to Booche's, well I guess maybe not a lot, but people go there, it's not treated the same way as those places. It's like people almost treat it with some reverence. They wouldn't want to be like super loud and stuff there like they would at other places."

AFTER VENABLE

Obviously there have been many owners of Booche's since Paul Venable passed away. The business didn't stay in the family either. Leonard and Earl Morris owned the establishment in

1925 right before its final move to S. Ninth Street somewhere around 1930. Booche's is reported to have stayed in the Morris family until 1967 when it was sold to Ed Barnhart. During Barnhart's career, Booche's received several "A" ratings from the city of Columbia for their food quality. Jack Logue is quoted in the March 1981 Columbia Missourian as saying that "the Club (Booche's) became famous for the best hamburger in the 1960's, when Barnhart owned it".



In October of 1976 Booche's was owned by Michael Jabbour, Robert Rappold, and Gerald Dethrow. The three owners' were self proclaimed poets and even started a poetry review titled Review La Booche in March 1975 before they even owned Booche's. Robert is quoted in the Missourian as saying that Booche's "Is one big poem. A lyrical poem. Just look around." Perhaps there is something poetic about a bar, burgers, and billiards joint that brings people together. The owners at this time were also looking to draw in a younger crowd being pretty young themselves at the time. Robert was 28 and in the same article said, "Our mainstay is the older crowd, but we want to attract new people who appreciate the atmosphere and can carry on the tradition". They must have done something right because some thirty years later the burgers are still flipping.

TRADITIONS

After many years of pleasing hungry tummies, a place like Booche's is bound to acquire more than just a couple traditions. Probably one of the most known and celebrated traditions at Booche's is the Christmas Eve dinner. In fact, Christmas Eve is one of the busiest days at Booche's.

People who went to school here will often travel back just for the Christmas Eve celebration. Laura Thomas of New Hampshire is quoted in the December 2007 Missourian as having made regular treks to Booche's for the Christmas Eve dinner since she went to college in the early 90s. That year the restaurant served an estimated 1,200 burgers on Christmas Eve.



Another tradition at Booche's involves honoring the memory of past regulars. "It's an old place that keeps tradition," Brian Heffernan said of Booche's, "They have some bottles up above the bar, bottles of Jameson or whatever, for old drinking guys who

went there all the time who've died and they put a bottle up and a shot glass on top of it to retire their "spot". It's a place where you can expect what's going to happen. It's a place of tradition, that's what I like about it."

The people who go to Booche's acquire traditions of their own as well. "One of my good friends, he and like a few of his friends happened to have the same schedule like all year and went there for lunch," Brian recalled, "It was like Booche's Tuesday or something like that. They would just go every week." Though Brian couldn't attend because his schedule didn't match up with his friends, he found the tradition to be memorable.

Besides friends who have traditions at Booche's, Brian would sometimes meet friendly strangers who had their own routines at the restaurant. He told me about a time when he and a couple of friends went to a crowded Booche's for lunch: "We were looking for a table and there was just one guy in that circle kind of table right when you walk in it's on the right and I asked him if he would mind sharing with us. So we ended up sitting with him, and this guy had been going there every Saturday for like eighteen years. And we ended up just kind of talking with him about what he's into. He was a chef or something, and I don't remember what else he did, but I've always

run into very interesting characters there. It's a place where kind of like characters hang out that have interesting stories. But yeah, he had been going there for a long time and he always had the same regimen of what he did when he got there. Two burgers and a Budweiser and then two hours later he had another Budweiser and he always had his certain paper that he read there. I guess people just know what to expect when they go there. They have like rituals they do there because they're like a ritualistic place."



BOOCHE'S NOW

When asked to speak about his experiences at Booche's, Peter McCarthy said, "I mean, it's Booche's. Can't you just make it up?" He had a laid back air about him on the Friday afternoon that I got him to say a few words about the place that he's been eating at for the last

twenty years he's been living in Columbia. He works now at the Western Historical Archives at the University of Missouri Campus. He goes into Booche's about twice a week and his favorite thing to order is the hamburger with everything. The only thing he would change about the restaurant? "The t-shirts," he said, "The colors should be the same as the original ones." Not a bad critique and something that can easily be fixed. He also hinted that sometimes there are "problems with the apostrophe in the window". Apparently sometimes the apostrophe in the "Booche's" sign is missing for reasons unknown. McCarthy claims that in the past twenty years Booche's is "pretty much the same except now they have a TV." Overall, McCarthy seemed excited to talk about one of his favorite places to eat and simply concluded, "It's the local pool hall-I guess the hype is true."

As for Brian, he plans to continue to eat at Booche's as long as he's in Columbia. And though he is unsure of where he will be after he finishes graduate school he hasn't ruled out going back to Booche's in the future. "I don't know exactly where I'll go right now, but coming back yeah that would definitely be a place where I would want to eat," he said.

Brian's favorite burger is the Western. "It's awesome," he exclaimed, "It's a normal burger, but

they bookend the burger with ham and the bun on the outside. I'd never had ham on a burger, but it's awesome." He's only been able to have his other favorite item on the menu twice. "They have this sausage, potato, and kale soup," he explained, "and it's just unbelievable. I always hope each time I go in there that they're going to have it, but they never do. I guess it kind of goes against the whole predictability aspect of Booche's. Each time I go there I know what I'm going to eat, but I never know what soup they're going to have." Soup is only served on Fridays at Booche's and it's not prepared until Friday morning so there is no way of knowing what soup will be served beforehand.

After having developed a bit of a history with Booche's over the last four or more years, I decided to ask Brian if he felt like a regular. "I feel like I'm in the presence of regulars when I go there," he explained, "And so like, when I go in there I'll go in and do my thing like eat good food and relax and have like a beer or two. One thing I'd never want to do there is raise a ruckus or like disrupt whatever's going on. I've been going there for a few years, but there are people who have been going there for like twenty years. "

In the end, it seems that predictability is what brings Booche's such a good crowd that keeps coming

back for more. "You kind of know what to expect there in that they don't do anything fancy," Brian said, "You're going to get a burger on a piece of wax paper or one of the other things they may have. They have soup on Fridays; the only day they do it. And you know on Sunday's they're not going to be opened. And everything's pretty predictable about it, but that's what's appealing about it. It's a good place. It's got that very old feel to it."

When I finally made my way past the doors of Booche's just a few weeks ago I couldn't help but feel a bit nostalgic recalling memories that weren't even my own. I felt a connection with the place from my research, but I also felt a certain disconnect since I was not a "regular". I definitely got the air of a "boy's bar", but once I had sat down at the table with Colleen and ordered a burger from the menu off the wall I started to feel more at ease. By the time my delicious burger was served on wax paper I had already had time to sip my coke and look around at the memorabilia on the wall. Old comics and witticism are spread throughout the room and the laid back atmosphere makes almost anyone start to feel at home after a while. After I had finished the last bite of my burger and threw my cash down on the table, I concluded that the Booche's tradition was being carried on and that as long as people continue to be

interested in the community it would continue to be a local hangout for many more years.

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