

## **GETTING A MEAL ON CAMPUS**

Russell M. Magnaghi  
April 30, 2021

On the contemporary campus food is readily available to students, staff and visitors but was this always the case? No. The earliest food service facility on campus was located in the private dorm, located at the site of the St. Michael church parking lot. It was operated by John Longyear and Fred Ayer between 1900 and 1917. The first president, Dwight Waldo and his family – wife Minnie and two children - lived in the dorm, where they took their meals with students until 1904 when he was made president of Western Michigan Normal School.

After that time until the opening of Carey Hall in 1948, students resided in rented rooms in homes and took their meals there or at special private dining facilities. There were a few restaurants like the College Inn, located in the vicinity of Northern. In the early years, receptions and banquets were held in local hotels. In 1910, Margaret Buchly was hired in the Department of Domestic Science. She began to use the department to provide the institution with on-campus banquets. With the completion of Kaye Hall in 1915, its foyer allowed these banquets to be held.

When student-faculty food events were held on campus, the main food on the menu was pasties and an apple as dessert. These meals were held in the gym. Retirement banquets usually included a table filled with a variety of casseroles.

With the end of World War II, President Henry Tape saw that the enrollment would suddenly increase due to the G.I. bill for veterans to attend college and additional dining facilities would be needed. In early 1946, he negotiated a deal with the U.S. Army to obtain a temporary dining room structure. Everyone was thrilled when this facility opened.

This cafeteria was used from 1947 to 1948 when Lee-Carey Hall opened and dining facilities expanded.

The Lee Hall cafeteria opened in late 1948 located in the Union building and served the female students housed in Carey Hall. When Spooner dorm opened in the mid-1950s male students has their adjoining dining room, where they took their meals dressed in jackets and separated from the women.

When the University Center opened in 1960, it had resident hall dining facilities and the cafeteria, known as the Wild Cat Den on the first floor. Its characteristic feature was wooden booths which had names carved into them. With the eastern extension of the UC in 1964, the Charcoal Room was opened which originally served grilled food. It became a favorite dining room for faculty, staff and administrators. It is was the area where this meeting is being held.

All of these facilities continued to operate until the UC was renovated in the early 1990s and it was decided to consolidated all of the food service operations. The Charcoal Room and the Wild Cat Den were closed. At this time the Wildcat Den Food Court was created. With this renovation, Howard Schultz, NMU alumnus, allowed Northern to be the only university in the US to have a Starbucks outlet. It is interesting to note that when Starbucks expanded to Harden Hall, students complained that they would have to pay \$3 for a cup of coffee. How things have changed as Starbucks in Jamrich Hall is extremely popular with students who pay much more than \$3 for a cup of java.

Before the last development of dining facilities into the Woods and in the University Center, the various dorm complexes had their own dining facilities. Every effort was made

to make these facilities appetizing to students who had become used to better dining than students had in the past.

Over the years the Hospitality and Tourism Management program developed on campus having its origins back in 1910. Students enrolled in the Hospitality Management program are educated in the operating functions and supervision of a variety of industry establishments such as restaurants, catering, event planning, hotels, casinos, and cruises. Advanced management skills are a highlight of the program and are learned through hands-on experience and they operate Culinary Café and Chez Nous, the latter a high-end restaurant in Jacobetti Hall.

Over the last 122 years getting a meal on campus or developing a career around food has steadily improved to the state that it has reached.