



# St. Michael Historian

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**The St. Michael Café was once located between the Welter Implement Company and the Security Bank of St. Michael on the corner of Main & Central Ave.**

## SWEET MEMORIES

Small town Cafés are becoming a thing of the past. Helen Eull Peloquin has lived all her life in St. Michael and has seen many changes. Her first job at the age of 16 was “candling” eggs for the Halliger’s Grocery Store in St. Michael. She became the first cook for Jack Poplar when he opened the St. Michael Café in 1946. She heard about the job from Jack’s dad, who was a mail carrier. Mail carriers had time to talk in those days. He mentioned that Jack was looking for someone to help him run the place. “Can you cook?” he asked. She was 18 at the time and had lots of experience helping her mom with cooking on the farm for a family with 8 brothers and sisters. So she decided to try it.



**Meetings for 2011  
Second Monday  
of each month  
Newsletter Created  
By Genny Kieley**



# ST. MICHAEL CAFÉ

By Genny Kieley



There was just the three of them at the café at first. Jack, Helen cooking and Lenore was the waitress. With a counter of about 10 stools, three tables and a row of booths in the back, it was a small place decorated with lots of dark stained wood. In today's time the St. Michael Café would be a sought out place because they served home cooked meals like fried chicken, roast beef, chow mein, a favorite goulash [nicknamed funeral hotdish] and home-made potato soup.

The place was packed for the Wednesday night special of turkey dinner with dressing and potatoes. On Friday nights after the town dances there would be no place to sit down. Well known for their pies—the German traditional—sour cream with raisin, as well as apple, banana, coconut cream and lemon meringue. Many would stop on their way home from work to pick up a pie.

The St. Michael Café was a great place for people to meet up and have a great meal served. In those days it was a lot of work running a restaurant with a small crew. Helen met her husband, Paul Peloquin at the St. Michael Café and married him in 1950. She remembers peeling potatoes by the bucket and making so many pies that she doesn't like to think about it. Some of the long time waitresses were Cindy Heuring Pollack, Kathy Kunkel, Mary Zachman and Julie Scherber.

They got their eggs from the Duane Kemetmueller farm. Lots of regulars came in all the time from the Land-o-Lakes Creamery and the NSP guys, as well as the distributors from Gluek and Grain Belt.

Their closest claim to fame was when the crew from the TV show, 60 minutes wanted to film an episode in the Café. A young man from St. Michael had been shot in the cities and now was wheelchair bound. The filming never took place.

Jack Poplar owned the restaurant for less than a year. "Nubbs" Barthel took it over and ran it as Nubb's Café from 1946 to 1950. Among other owners Christine Zachmann ran it as Christine's Café from 1952 to 1960.

# Sewing & Working at Dueber's



Paul and Helen Peloquin owned it from 1975 to 1980 and finally Richard and Judy Hofmeister operated the café the longest, 23 years, until the city bought the property for street widening and redevelopment in 2003. Judy's family, the Kesslers also helped with the restaurant. Many remember the engraved plaque on the wall that said,

***“Best Damn Café in the USA.”***



Helen started sewing when she was 8 years old. Taking white sugar sacks; she would trace pictures out of a color book. Then she would cut them into a 12 inch square and make a quilt from the embroidered squares. During the summer at age 10 she had a job of watching the cows for one of their neighbors for 10 cents a day. Sometimes they were paid in bananas. She would sit and embroider just to pass the time.

She has always liked sewing and she says she would rather sew than eat. She learned how to sew on an old treadle machine. She made her own clothes and most of her children's clothes too—even coats. She would take a garment a part to see how it was made and copy it without using a pattern. She still embroiders dish towels and makes quilts that are embroidered and appliquéd. She is part of the American Legion Auxiliary. She and other ladies donate their time to make gifts for the Vets in St. Cloud, which include dish towels, stuffed animals and quilts.



**When It was called “Christine’s Cafe” owned by Christine Zachmann**



**When it was “Nubb’s Café” owned by Nubbs Barthel**

# St. Michael Historical Society



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## Dueber's Variety Store

Located in the Colonial Mall where Subway is now. Dueber's sold small appliances, clothes for the family, aprons, linens, dishes, notions and were well known for their fabrics. There weren't many fabric stores around in those days so people came from far away to shop there. They packed a lot of merchandize into that small store. Helen Peloquin managed the store for about seven years. Students and women who were new to sewing would ask a lot of questions about their projects. The most common one was "Does this match?" She helped to open and close it in the 1990s. It was a favorite store and women were sad when it left. There is still a Dueber's Fabric store in Waconia.

Earlier stores in the Colonial Mall were Guy's Bakery, Ace Hardware, Patsy's Hair Fashions, Four Season's Department Store, Edelweis Gift Haus, Adair Liquors, Windmill Variety and Pako Photomart (a 24-hour film devel-oping "shop", which was actually a booth in the parking lot). The bakery changed hands several times. One of the favorites was "Grandma Jon's Bakery." Other businesses in the mall have included Coast to Coast Hardware, Snyder Drugstore and Wildwood Beauty and Barber Shop. Crow River Lanes was added to the west end of the building by Wally and Pat Aldkins in 1983.



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