

K's burgers outlasted chains, still a popular lunch

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"I remember a sign saying 'Six for a quarter — Buy 'em by the sack.' We would go there during lunchtime at the high school and grab a few hamburgers. Mr. Klein was there frying. It hasn't changed much since then. They still serve good hamburgers."

Comments like these are what has kept K's Hamburger Shop going for 42 years. Paul Klein, and his wife Doris have spent a lifetime running Troy's oldest restaurant. The Kleins believe in high quality, or as Mr. Klein phrases it, "I'm from the old school, so I know what is good."

Klein graduated from Lima High School in 1933, and on a trip home from Cincinnati he passed through Troy. He spotted a small lot on the Public Square next to the present-day M&R Drug Store, and felt it would be an ideal place for a hamburger shop. But it was not until 1935 that Paul and his twin brother David decided to open up a shop. Because the young men were only 20, their father had to sign the lease for them until they came of age. They rented a section of land from Harry Houser with a three-year lease with a two-year option. People didn't think it would last that long.

In July of 1935, K's Hamburger Shop opened, located on the present-day site of Erwin Plymouth Chrysler Dodge, across the street from its location now. All items were five cents, except soup,

pie and milkshakes, which were a dime. Besides Paul and David Klein (from whence came the name K's), there were two other employees.

In November, 1935, Paul was married, and his wife Doris took charge of accounts and bookkeeping, a task she still does today. Down the street (where the Christian Book and Gift Shoppe currently stands) was the Jewell Theater. K's caught most of the crowd when shows were over. It cost a nickel for the show and a nickel for a hamburger.

"And at that time," says Mrs. Klein, "average wages were only \$8-\$12 a week." She remembers that "Most other places had whole meals for 15 cents, while we served hamburgers for five cents."

The "other" places have been here and gone. Neil's Restaurant was in the southwest corner of the Public Square, where Uhlman's Fashion store sits today. One can still read the Neil name on the building. Haunton's Tea Room occupied the building where Millie's Fashionable Sample Shop is now.

The next real "sandwich shop" was Frisch's, located where Donaleeo's now does restaurant business. Isaly's ice cream and sandwich shop left in the '60s.

But K's remained active.

K's was not content just to remain in business. In 1940, an old Chinese laundry across Main Street burned down, and K's moved to its present location. It was very convenient, as their lease

from Houser was set to expire. Mr. Klein recalled with a laugh, "There was a lot of joking about who really burned down the Chinese laundry!"

There was an appliance store on the east side of the shop, and Brubaker's Grocery on the west side. In 1946, an addition towards the east was built, making room for booths for more patrons. The counter was remodeled into its present shape. This is the K's as most Trojans remember it from their high school days.

The Kleins remember trying to feed all of the hungry high school students who gathered at K's at lunch time. After baseball games, the crowd was so thick, that according to Mrs. Klein, "It was hard just to squeeze through!" Mr. Klein added, "Sometimes we had to lock the doors and keep people waiting outside, just because there wasn't enough room. Things changed when cars became popular with the kids. They went out of town for food, while the out-of-towners came to K's."

In 1958, K's moved further towards the east, creating the present-day layout. This added a whole room of booths, and facilitated extra help. From the original four, the number of employees has risen to 20-22 today.

One employee has been with K's for 28 years. Many people tease the Kleins that everyone in Troy has worked at K's at one time or another. Mrs. Klein denies this, but chuckles, "If not everyone, at least their mothers or grandmothers!"



In 1965 David Klein left the business, and Paul and Doris continued to operate K's. Back in the 1930's when K's began, most partnerships lasted only about two years. Lawyers couldn't believe a 30-year-old one.

The Kleins are very optimistic about K's future. When asked about the secret of K's long success, Mr. Klein replied, "There is no secret. We believe in quality, and that is what has established us. We have had very few complaints about our food in all 42 years." Mrs. Klein explained that "it is our life. We have no other hobbies. In fact, our daughter went to school and still works with us sometimes. It's hard work, but pleasant."

"People come from all over the United States to eat again at K's and renew old friendships," added Mr. Klein. "Actually, I think people are happier when they are eating than when doing anything else." The Kleins may have the secret right there.



K's first location opposite present site

