

The Origin of the Farm Kitchen and the Barn Restaurant

My thanks to Erhart Mueller for the following data on the "Farm Kitchen" and the "Barn" restaurants which was acquired from Mueller's book titled "Ochsner" written and published in 1988. For the full story please read "Ochsner" which is highly recommended reading. Also thanks to Tom and Darla Kuester, long time owners...

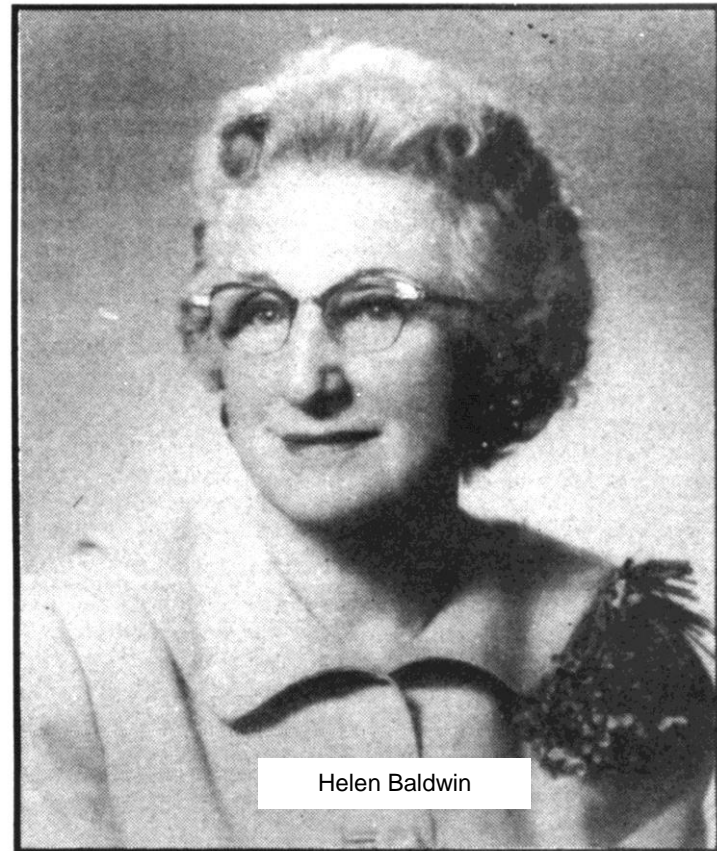
The Farm Kitchen Restaurant

Helen Hartmann was born in Chicago on October 5, 1892. Her maiden name was Harthman and her father was a well known surgeon. Helen graduated from Vassar College, where she helped pay her expenses by working at a candy shop which was eventually expanded into a restaurant. It was at this time that Helen decided she would like to have her own restaurant one day.

Helen graduated during the World War I years and joined the Women's Land Army. The Women's Land Army was organized to provide trained women to take the place of men who had to leave the farms to fight. They were trained in every aspect of farming. It was during this time that Helen was sent to a farm near Viroqua, Wisconsin. Her stay was cut short due to extreme undesirable weather and she returned soon to Land Army's headquarters. The Women's Land Army ended after the war ended in 1918.

The Woman's Land Army of America (WLAA) operated from 1917 to 1921, employing 15,000 - 20,000 urban women. Many were college educated, and units were associated with colleges. The WLAA was supported by Progressives like Theodore Roosevelt and was strongest in the West and Northeast, where it was associated with the suffrage movement. Other groups helping to organize the WLAA included the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association (WNFGA), the Temple

University Ambler staff, the State Council of Defense of some states, the Garden Club of America, and the YMCA. In addition to the WLAA, the U.S. government sponsored the U.S School Garden Army and the National War Garden Commission. Opposition came from Nativists, opponents of President Woodrow Wilson, and those who questioned the women's strength and the effect on their health.



Helen Baldwin

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She later became the manger of "Women's Home Companion" magazine in Chicago. There she met Harold Baldwin whom she later married. She traveled with Harold on a lecture circuit for 10 years and until their marriage ended in divorce

The thought of a tea room again entered Helen's mind and as she traveled throughout Wisconsin looking for a site, she traveled through the Devil's Lake and Baraboo area. In 1923 Helen purchased for \$7,000, the "Teely farm" on the Warner Road which had been in the Southard family since 1866 and would eventually become the site of the Farm Kitchen.

She set about repairing the property by adding a porch to the house which would seat up to 70 people. The apple orchard was revived and apple butter was produced for the guests to enjoy on the premises or to purchase. Her two-acre garden produced fresh vegetables. The granary was remodeled to house the boys that were the waiters. Much of the baking was done on site and four cottages were constructed for visiting guests.

The restaurant went on to win national awards, the Duncan-Hine's Fifth-Of-The-Century award and the National Restaurant Association Award of Excellence.

Lorene Ochsner was a nurse and returned to Prairie du Sac to care for her ill mother. While Lorene was visiting her friend Helen Baldwin at the Farm Kitchen she decided to work with Baldwin at the restaurant. After Lorene's mother's death of cancer in 1936, she decided to become a partner in the dining establishment and never returned to her nursing career.

Eventually Lorene became the manager, taking care of the books and acting as the Hostess. Lorene remained a partner until her death in 1954.

Baldwin retired in 1960 and constructed a house in Baraboo a short distance west of St. Claire Hospital and died on January 25, 1984 at the age of 91 years. After cremation, her ashes were spread around the fireplace east of the restaurant.

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Arthur Ochsner was born January 7, 1885 to Henry Adolph and Anna (Weirich) Ochsner. Arthur married Emma Schumacher of Reedsburg in the summer of 1915. Art and Emma raised a family of two boys and two girls on the homestead property in Honey Creek.

After a long search the Ochsner's purchased the 40-acre Prine farm on Warner Road onto which they moved in 1943. The farm had several cottages that were rented during the summer. Arthur had given up raising animals so the barn was no longer needed. Emma decided to clean the barn-building and there-in use it to serve breakfast of sandwiches, coffee and her prized pancakes to their guests.

Emma and her daughter Karla decided to renovate the building and started by painting the inside walls chocolate brown to a height of six feet and the balance a light yellow. The gutters were filled and veneered with flagstone rock. The ceiling timbers were cleaned and painted.

Eventually the "Barn" opened. Daughter Karla had worked at the Farm Kitchen and was familiar with cooking and waitressing and spent most of her time in the kitchen of the new operation.

Emma operated the Barn for some years and in 1951 she and Arthur decided to sell the land and the Barn. Arthur died on March 4, 1972 at the age of 87 and Emma on June 2, 1988 at the age of 94.



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