

Housewife's Nightmare: 7,000 For Lunch



CAFETERIA MAN NORMAN A. WOLFE
He caters for Birmingham public schools.

By **MARY ELLEN MEAD**
Staff Writer

Suburban housewives who trundle through super markets at least once a week; shudder, once they get home, at having to tote bags of stuff from car to kitchen, then sigh over a budget that's been shot to pieces, should meet Norman A. Wolfe, assistant superintendent of Birmingham public schools and in charge of all school cafeterias.

He not only buys by the ton—such things as butter, ground beef, chicken, turkey, cheese—but manages to come out ahead, budget-wise.

When Wolfe first came to town back in 1947, there'd been no building of schools since the 1920's—there was Baldwin High, plus four elementaries. During the year '46-'47, four rooms were annexed in Franklin and four at Walnut Lake. About that time, too, Barnum switched to a junior high.

VERY FEW YOUNGSTERS ate lunch at school in those days. Although Baldwin had a

small cafeteria, it only served about 160 kids a day and when that number dropped to 20, they closed up shop.

Most students in the '40's were "walkers" (there were only three buses for the entire district) and since they had an hour for lunch, they either went home or trotted over to the nearest local drug store.

Basically, according to Wolfe, most cafeteria schools started after 1945, prompted, perhaps, by subsidization from the federal government which was promoting a "hot lunch program" for youngsters all across the nation. In some areas, this was the only nutritious meal a child ate all day.

Norm's current budget works this way: the government pays six cents per lunch, elementary youngsters pay 25 cents per lunch and junior and senior high school students pay 30 cents per lunch—with 5,767 lunches served per day. Quite a jump from the original 160 at Baldwin.

"And even with inflation," says Wolfe, "there's been no

change in lunch prices in the last 14 years."

LIKE ANY GOOD kitchen mechanic, Wolfe realizes that the cost of labor comes higher than the cost of food, so all of our schools are equipped with the finest in labor saving devices—from potato peelers to dish washers.

And all these practical additions, have been purchased with money made on the lunches—no subsidy needed.

Wolfe's staff includes 117 employees. There are 12 cafeteria managers, three assistant managers, three range cooks, three pastry cooks, three salad cooks, 52 general cooks, 39 paid students, one part-time clerk in the central office, one part-time delivery man and the cafeteria supervisor.

DURING 1962-63 this group provided services for 14 banquets at which over 2,600 diners were served.

Maybe being just an ordinary housewife catering to an average-size family isn't so bad after all.

'Squirts' Paved Way To Anti-Spit Law

The old Hill School was the scene in 1901 of a crude but cocky war against spitting on the sidewalks. Village youths used to congregate around the schoolhouse steps late afternoons and evenings, and imitating their elders, squirted tobacco juice in all directions.

School board members complained, teachers scolded, village residents were disgusted at the juice-stained appearance of the area.

Following some particularly juicy remarks about the problem printed in *The Eccentric*, the boys retaliated with a statement to the newspaper, which was suspected to have been written by Editor George H. Mitchell himself.

"**YOU SAY SOME** unkind things in regard to some of us going to the school house and spitting tobacco juice all over the steps. You even said we had better stop it before we get caught, just as though we were culprits of some sort.

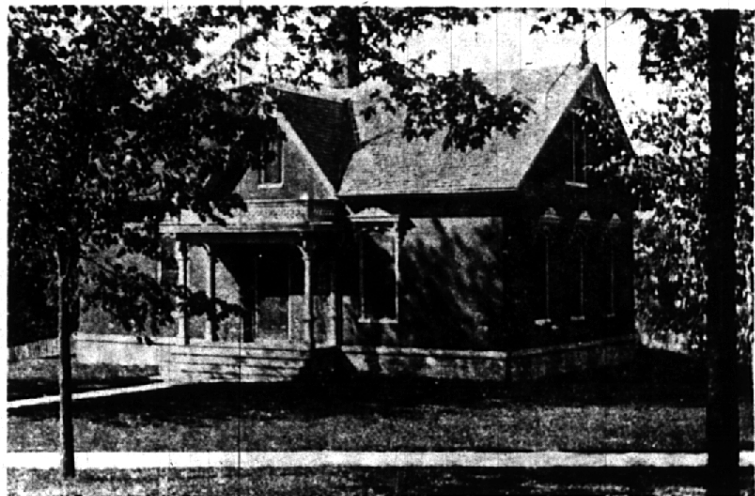
"Why, we usually take the most conspicuous corner, seating ourselves on the window ledge at the corner of the Ford block (north-

west corner of Woodward and Maple) and spit three ways—to the right, to the left and in front of us.

"Please remember that we boys are only following the example of our fathers and big brothers. Why, only a year ago when some cranks asked for a law against spitting (they called it expectoration) on the sidewalks, didn't all our great men make fun of it and didn't they say it was the most ridiculous thing that ever was, and that the Constitution guaranteed to every feller life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?"

"**NOW IF IT'S** bad to stop our governors and dads, its just as bad to say such things to us and we'll go to the school house—and church, too, if we want to."

George Mitchell favored the law against spitting on the sidewalks when it was first proposed by Mattie Baldwin and her lady cohorts. But he had to wait until 1906 before he could happily report that such an ordinance was passed by the village board.



Served as School in 1855

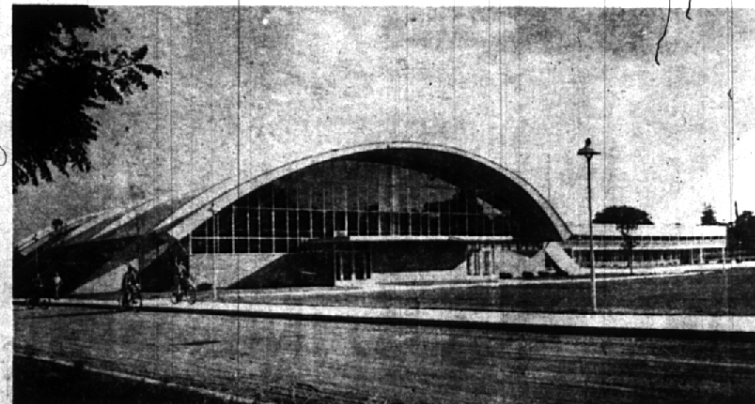
Birmingham's first red brick schoolhouse was built in 1855 at 556 W. Maple. Situated on a parcel of land overlooking the River Rouge valley, the location is now the site of

the home of Mrs. Harry Allen. When the school building came into the possession of the Allens' a general remodeling of it was abandoned when a wall collapsed.

From the Old... To the Very, Very New



HILL SCHOOL AT CHESTER AND MARTIN
It began serving the village in 1869.



DERBY JUNIOR HIGH AT DERBY AND ADAMS
Ultra-modern structure opened in September, 1956.