

Jimmie's Café— 126 South Central Avenue

Jim and Helen Wilcott were married December 29, 1920 by Father Stehling at Sacred Heart Church. Jim was a son of Solomon and Sarah Ann (Hamil) Wilcott, and Helen, a daughter of James and Catherine (Duyer) Welch. They had three children, Mary, who married Bert Brunner; Jim Jr. who married Arlene Karl; and Sarah who married Bill Biechler.

In 1937 they bought the Cafe from Chick Jenkins and re-named it Jimmie's Cafe. Helen and Jim worked many long hard hours to get the business established. Helen baked up to 16 pies a day. As the children grew older, they all helped, washing dishes (by hand), sweeping, waiting tables, cooking or wherever needed.

Jim Jr. served with the Merchant Marines during World War II and later returned to the cafe to work with his dad. Jim Sr. worked until age 72 and then turned the restaurant over to young Jim and his wife "Tootie." Jim Sr. still went down every day, donned an apron, to help, but mostly to talk with old friends. Jim Jr. managed the cafe until his illness kept him at home. Tootie kept the business going during that time and also after his death in 1989. All four of their chil-



Chick's café later sold to the Wilcott family to become Jimmie's Café. (Donald Schnitzler collection.)



Jim and Helen Wilcott family. (Back row, left to right): Jim, Jr. and Mary. (Front row, left to right): Helen, Sarah, Jim, Sr.

dren worked at Jimmie's; Karyn (Dave) Stienes, Paul (Sue) Wilcott, Jill (Dan) Maxinoski and Missy Binder, who is now the owner-manager. Jimmie's Cafe has been in the Wilcott family for over 60 years, and three generations. Among the fourth generation, those who have worked there are: P. J., Tini, and Jennie Wilcott and Andrea Stienes.

Jim Sr. passed away in August 1987. Helen still resides in Marshfield. There are 10 living grandchildren, one grandson, Michael Brunner was killed in action in Vietnam in 1968; 28 great-grandchildren; and two great-great grandchildren.

The following poem was written about Jimmie's Cafe in 1989 by Roland G. Frey to celebrate 50 years in business:

Fifty plus years of service you see,
A family tradition in our community.
A friendly family – very nice,
Lots of food and you can't beat the price.

The needy gather there, with the affluent,
There are those who think Jimmie's is heaven sent.
Many times without pay, they feed the needy,
We know sometimes, they feed the greedy.

But that doesn't matter to Jimmie you see,
He gave from the heart, when it was free.
He would rather feed a person that has greed,
Than miss one person that has a real need.

"For when I was hungered and ye gave me meat,"
"When took we thee in?" they asked so sweet.
"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto least of these,
My brethren," Jesus said, "ye have done it unto me."

You can go there and eat with Marshfield's best,
Or with the unfortunate, you know the rest.
You can sit there and visit and have a good time,
Or just sit and eat, to them it's just fine.

Fifty years plus is a mighty long time,
Coffee was a nickel, hamburgers a dime.
Fifty years later and now we can laugh,
Coffee fifty cents, burgers a dollar and a half.

Jimmie doesn't ask if you have money in the banks,
So now is the time we are just saying thanks.
We've said enough, what more can we say?
For service to all, it's JIMMIE'S CAFE.

(Above story & poem were submitted by Mary Brunner for the Marshfield History Book, Vol. 2.)

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The building, an attractive Commercial Vernacular building with Italianate details was constructed before 1904 to match the building to the south. Architectural detail can be seen in the projecting cornice, with a series of recessed brick courses. Dentils accent the course while bricks laid at an angle form the bottom one. Initially, the building was occupied by a saloon and became part of the Majestic Hotel* around 1912. Since 1938, it has been known as Jimmie's Café, a restaurant run by the Wilcott family.
(from Downtown Marshfield: An Architectural and Historical Walking Tour, July 1991)

"The Marinello people [Marinello Beauty Salon] went above in the second floor of the Jimmy's building. The first floor of the Jimmy's building also had some merchantile in from the Kleinheinz's in their earlier years, now we're talking about the turn of the century. And then prior to Jimmy's getting into that builing it was operated by a fellow by the name of Chick..., " said John Christner, Historian, during taping of "Mainstreet—Marshfield."

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Jimmie's Cafe ends 64 year tradition

By Amy E. Bowen
Of the News-Herald

One of the defining moments in Mickey Guldan's life happened at Jimmie's Cafe. Guldan's now-husband proposed to her outside the Marshfield restaurant in 1955. They then celebrated over hamburgers and malts.

That's just one of the many memories that the Wilcott family will remember after the restaurant closes its doors Monday. Jimmie's, located at 126 S. Central Ave., has been in the Wilcott family for 64 years, and has been run by three generations.



Jimmies Caf  ca. 2001

"It's going to be sad," Mary Brunner, daughter of original owner Jim Wilcott Sr., said. "There are a lot of memories here."

According Cheryl Polster, a restaurant employee, Jimmie's was asked to leave by the building's landlord because he wanted to bring in a new business.

Jim Sr. purchased part of the restaurant from Chic Jenkins in 1937. He later bought the rest of the building 10 years later, and the business has never moved. Since its opening, Jimmie's has been run by family members, kids, grandkids, nieces and nephews.

Jim Sr.'s granddaughter, Missy Binder, took over the restaurant from her mother, Tooty Wilcott, in 1994. Tooty ran it after her husband, Jim Wilcott Jr., died in 1989.

"My siblings and their families were very supportive of helping down out there when needed," Binder said. "They've always pulled together. We've always been supportive with everything."

In its heyday, Jimmie's was a popular high school hangout to a lunch time retreat for nearby workers. During the noon hour, there was usually standing room only, and when the bars closed, people packed the restaurant.

"People like to come in and chat," Brunner said.

The Wilcotts knew most of their customers by name. Many times, customers didn't even have to order.

It's like Cheers, people sit in the same chair or booth," Guldán said.

"People are creatures of habit," Brunner said. "They always had the same thing."

Jimmie's was renowned for its hot beef sandwich and mash potatoes real mashed potatoes. Plate lunches cost only 35 cents at one point, and customers still talk about the Wilcott's pineapple pie.

"People came in and wanted a good meal, and that's what they got," Brunner said.

The restaurant closed only for Christmas Day. However, Jimmie's closed to celebrate Jim Sr.'s daughter's wedding day. Sarah Biechler, the bride, said that many of the customers attended the wedding reception to eat.

"Closing the restaurant was a sin," Tooty said.

The only other time that Jimmie's closed was during World War II. Brunner said that that it was forced to close Sundays.

"During the war, when meat was rationed, they were open six days a week," Brunner said. "They had to close Sundays because there wasn't enough meat."

Jim Sr. and Jim Jr. were known for their generosity. Whoever walked through the door was assured a good meal, whether or not they could pay. Both also loved kids, and grand-children were often seen in the kitchen or picking out a favorite candy bar with grandpa.

"(Jim Sr.) had to have an apron on to talk to anyone," Tooty said. "If he didn't have an apron on, he was shy."

"My dad could cook and carry on a conversation and never miss a beat," Binder said of Jim Jr.

Orders were never written down Jim Sr. and Jim Jr. had uncanny memories of what customers ordered.

Tooty said that she noticed a decline in the restaurant's popularity after Jim Jr. died. The restaurant started to



News-Herald photo by Dan Young

BRAD MARTENS, of Marshfield, sits in the background, enjoying one of the last cups of coffee to be served at Jimmie's Cafe in Marshfield.

close earlier, and people's habits started to change.

The restaurant did not, however Family members, friends and employees can still remember what booth a customer sat in, and when winter's frost coats the front window, the advertisement "Hamburgers 5 cents" can still be seen.

"If's almost the same as it was in 1947," Tooty said.

Even now, Binder said that the love for the restaurant in evident.

"The people have always been like family to us," Binder said. "I think it was because we all worked together and had fun together, and that was reflected with the customers. I'll miss that."

(from Marshfield News-Herald, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 16 Jun 2001, Pages 1 & 4)



The building which was once occupied by Jimmie's Café is on the right half of the white building shown in the picture. At current time, it is unoccupied. Farmer's Insurance is located in the left half of the building and Domino's Pizza is off to the right of the building. (2002)

*See additional story on the [Majestic Hotel](#).

*See additional story on the [Mersch Hotel](#).

*See additional story on 126-132 S Central Avenue

If you have any additional information (including pictures) regarding this business or location, we would really appreciate you contacting us and sharing. We will add information whenever possible.

For questions, or for sharing additional information, please contact us at schnitzl@charter.net. Please include what story the information relates to. Attach your text information in the form of a word document, please no PDF's. Photos should preferably be in jpeg format.

For additional stories on the historical sights and businesses of Marshfield, visit our website at: <http://www.marshfieldgenealogy.com/QR-Codes-of-Historical-Marshfield.html>.

NOTICE!

Beginning Friday, Apr. 4,
we will be **CLOSED** for
REMODELING . . . open
again about April 14th.

JIMMIE'S CAFE

James Wilcott, Prop.

LOCAL CAFE TO CLOSE FOR REMODELING TODAY

Jimmie's Cafe, 126 S. Central avenue, will close tonight for the purpose of beginning extensive remodeling activities, James Wilcott, the proprietor, announced today. The business is expected to reopen on April 14. The remodeling, estimated to cost about \$15, 000, will include redecorating and new fixtures.

(from the Marshfield News-Herald, Marshfield, Wisconsin, 03 Apr 1947, Page 2 & 6)