

We All Scream for Ice Cream!

Asking longtime Brighton residents about the best place for ice cream elicits a long list of providers. Present-day Abbott's at the Twelve Corners comes up first but then one hears "Remember the chocolate almond frozen custard at Don & Bob's?" Then come reminiscences about Howard Johnson's "28 Flavors," the Christmas-decorated ice cream slices from Jackson & Bailey, and DeRyke's ice cream on Monroe Avenue (where Cook's World is now). Dawn Creamery had a store where the Twelve Corners Plaza is now, in addition to its location at 1705 East Avenue in the old Brighton village. Further along Monroe Avenue was Chilson's Pharmacy that, like most drug stores in its day, maintained a soda fountain in the store.

The many options for ice cream in the Twelve Corners area meant that one didn't need to go very far for a cone or a sundae but, if one traveled just a little further north to old Brighton village, there was Maggs ice cream store on East Avenue. Maggs had a long run from its origins on East Main Street near University Avenue in 1917 to its long-term site at 1893 East Avenue in 1941. Its location claimed by the construction of the Eastern Expressway (Interstate 490), Mrs. Maggs was forced to move to cramped quarters at 1851 East Avenue in 1963. In 1966, Mrs. Maggs announced her retirement and offered the business for sale. An arrangement with the House of Desserts in 1959 enabled Maggs ice cream aficionados to find the product at Panorama Plaza but not after 1966.

What made Maggs ice cream so special? In the words of Edith Maggs, "Our ice cream is French custard ice cream which means our ingredients are all cooked before they are frozen and it is all hand-packed. We use the finest cream, sugar, fresh eggs, and the best flavorings available."

Generally accepted as the most popular dessert in the United States, ice cream is said to have been served in the American colonies as early as 1744 but the French, always a little ahead of the gastronomical curve, were serving ice cream in Paris in 1677.

As with so many early innovations, Thomas Jefferson is attributed with introducing ice cream to the United States at his dinner parties at Monticello. As American minister to Paris from 1784 to 1789, he had learned how to prepare and serve it. Jefferson is also credited with being the first American to have a recipe for ice cream. How welcome the cold, sweet treat would have been to early Americans on a hot summer day, just as it is today!

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