



Remembering

The Purdue University Creamery

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A little bit of heaven was served within the walls of Smith Hall on the Purdue University campus. On June 30, 1969 the Purdue University Creamery closed, and as we come upon the 45th anniversary of its closing, it is time to educate a couple of generations of the sheer delights they have missed and of the facility which helped manufacture them.

It is also appropriate to celebrate the 101 years since the opening of Smith Hall, where a steady stream of dairymen were trained ever since the building was opened late in 1913.



Remarkable line-up of Purdue University Creamery packaged products including Cottage Cheese and Ice Cream of various sizes



Purdue University Creamery half pint bottle

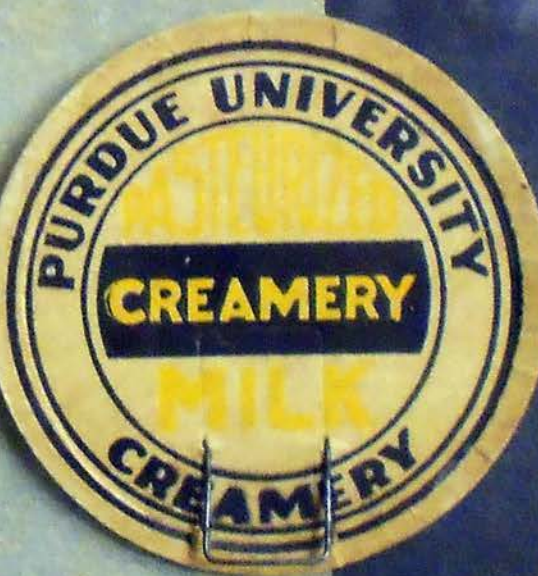
You were just a few feet from ice cream paradise as you entered the small foyer through the main entrance of the building, located just off State Street.

The small and often crowded creamery store was located on the ground floor, just beyond the main east-west hallway that now houses classrooms and the office of the entomology department. Looking back at you through large windows were those inviting two and a half gallon tubs of ice cream, each filled with chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, butter pecan, black cherry and many other flavors churned out by the students who worked at the creamery.

Each of these delicious flavors tempted you to give it a try. The smiling sales ladies, dressed in white pressed uniforms, were eager to mound high a double-dip just for you. A double-dip would set you back a dime. It was a cheap date for many a Purdue student.

Construction of Smith Hall was completed in 1913, following the gift of \$50,000 to Purdue by William C. Smith, a farmer from nearby Williamsport, Ind. The money donated in 1912 was directed for use in the construction of a building dedicated to instructing students on the principals of modern dairying.

The creamery was located toward the rear of the building, with a



driveway for the delivery of milk located on the southeast corner of the property. The driveway led to an elevated loading dock.

Included in its design of the building were classrooms, laboratories for research and teaching and office space. In 1915, the Agricultural Experiment Station in its annual report noted that the creamery produced 204,933 pounds of butter and nearly 25,000 pints of whipping cream. In later years, an east wing and a west wing were added to the original building, greatly increasing square footage.

Despite the difficult times brought on by the depression of the 1930s, the creamery did well. Throughout the decade, the creamery averaged over \$3,000 in profit annually while building up a substantial reserve that was used to pay for needed repairs, replace equipment and prevent the use of taxpayer money being spent.

In 1931, a profit of \$4,307 was the largest for many years. Purdue was expanding production during the 1930s. During the 1932-33 school year, the creamery processed over 121,000 pounds of butter, 20,000 pounds of cheese, 6,300 gallons of sweet cream, almost 28,000 gallons of buttermilk, 60,500 gallons of milk, and over 7,600 gallons of the famous Purdue ice cream.

Earl Butz, formerly both the Purdue Dean of Agriculture and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, in a 2001 interview with Jack Albright, remembered buying ice cream cones for only a nickel when he was a student from 1928 to 1932. The price was not increased until 1968, a year before closing, when it doubled to a dime. Even with the doubling in price, Merle Cunningham, Professor Emeritus in Animal Science said, "You never walked away hungry after having a double dip. You always got more than your money's worth."

In a 1940 report on food purchased and served for campus use, Purdue President Edward C. Elliott announced that all dairy products served on campus were manufactured at the Purdue Creamery. It was also announced



Above: Purdue University Creamery colorful box labeled sweet cream
Left: 3 different Purdue University Milk caps

that no butter substitutes were served on the university's campus. It was board policy to give the students access to all the high quality milk and butter they wanted.

Elliott was so proud of the Purdue Creamery and its delicious treats, he had the creamery's trade mark copyrighted. Both students and faculty alike continued to beat a path to the creamery store to wolf down ice cream cones between classes.

The decade of the 50s saw the brilliance of Dr. Fred Babel as a professor of animal sciences. He became famous and well respected in the dairy manufacturing world with his patent for a cream dressing added to cottage cheese. This dressing retarded bacterial growth to lengthen its shelf life. He also developed the famous Purdue Swiss-style cheese, which is still sold by the Purdue Agriculture Alumni Association with proceeds funding student scholarships.

During the early part of the 1960s, the Board of Trustees hired an architectural firm to develop plans to build a new creamery to replace its antiquated equipment. The building was to be completed by 1965 and financed by non-state-appropriated funds. Before planning was completed and construction started, the building project was put on hold.

Sales plummeted following a September 28, 1962 Indianapolis Star newspaper article, critical of Purdue competing with privately owned dairies. The home delivery route sales, which were limited to the West Lafayette-Lafayette area, dropped drastically and were ultimately eliminated. This left the creamery supplying dairy products on campus to the food service complexes and student dormitories.

In April of 1969, the end of the creamery and all of its tasty delights was nearing its end. University Treasurer Lytle Freehafer informed the public that the methods of dairy processing had changed drastically in the previous years and the creamery had become outdated. The Board of Trustees believed dairy products could be purchased more reasonably on the competitive market. Production was to stop on June 30, 1969.

Hundreds of patrons stopped by the sales room on that last day. Earl Butz stopped by and enjoyed a black cherry ice cream cone for the final time. John Hicks, special assistant to President Hovde, trekked over from the administration building to get in on the nostalgia. Not realizing the creamery had closed, hundreds of potential customers continued to make the pilgrimage to Smith Hall for a special treat. They turned away disappointed, not being able to reward their taste buds with that sweet, creamy sensation.

But not all is lost. If you are longing for that long-ago taste of rich, creamy paradise known as Purdue Creamery ice cream, you can find it at Pappy's Sweet Shoppe in the Purdue Memorial Union.

Pappy's features ice cream made with the old Purdue Creamery formula. Now that ice cream isn't manufactured in Smith Hall, but just down the road at Glover's Ice Cream in nearby Frankfort, Ind.



Purdue University printing plate



Purdue University ice cream spoons



Purdue University colorful ice cream box



Purdue University cottage cream