Thursday Revue

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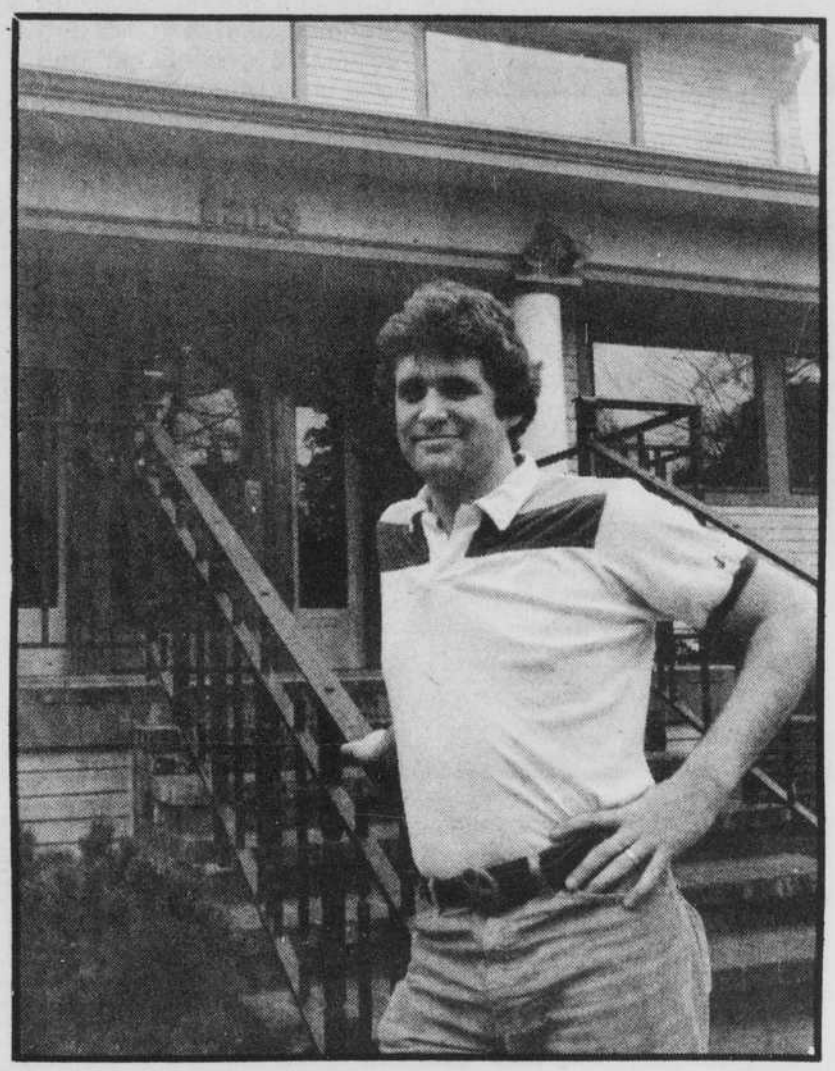
Will the real Taylor's please stand up?



The Taylor Brothers have reclaimed the corner of 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street to open Old Taylor's. Nathan Bartholemew is now down Kincaid Street with Rennie's Landing.

Old Taylor's and Rennie's vie for a history

"I'll meet you at Taylor's" used to be a fairly unambiguous statement around the University. For many years such a typical proposal would prompt a person to go, without hesitation, to the corner of 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street for their *rendez-vous avec la biere.*

Last month, however, an evolutionary change occurred in this simple scheme of things. With the advent of Rennie's Landing and Old Taylor's, offering the idea of "meeting at Taylor's" usually prompts the reply "which one?" Now there are *two* Taylor's — or so many people seem to think.

Who, or what, is actually Taylor's these days is somewhat of a subjective question for almost everyone but Todd Taylor and Nathan Bartholemew. Todd and his brothers K.C. and Cam have assumed command of *what used to be* Taylor's on 13th and Kincaid; Nathan, the manager of the former Taylor's, has moved his operations over to Rennie's Landing, just one block away on the corner of 12th Avenue and Kincaid Street. Both places, it seems, have claims to the Taylor's fame.

Way back in 1930 Fred Taylor bought the building on the the corner of 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street and opened an ice cream parlor. Fred handed the operation to his son Hershle, who ran things until his death in 1954, when Rod Taylor took over. Rod ran the business until his retirement, and then he leased the building to people outside the family.

"That's where the mix-up comes from," says Todd. "My father retired, and my brothers and I were way too young to enter the business. So for eight years the students didn't have our family on the corner."

Those "eight years" were from 1972 until last month — the reign of the Taylor's most of us came to know and, in our own way, love. Todd and his brothers came of age, and their father leased the building to them when the previous lease expired, thus re-establishing the Taylor family in the old business.

"Even though we're 'new' in the sense of taking over the business," Todd says, "we've really been in this line of work for a long time — we all worked here as kids. We bused tables here when the area around the campus was 'dry.' "

Nathan Bartholemew wasn't exactly tickled when Rod Taylor told him he had to move out. "We moved out of Taylor's," Nathan says, "but not out of choice. We wanted to stay there."

Reluctant though they were to leave their home of eight years, Nathan feels he and his associates are now glad they moved. "When we moved we wanted to find the closest possible place we could. We wanted to stay in the same general area because of our clientele."

They didn't have to look far. They found the house John Rennie had built (back in the 1920's) only a block away, and after completely rebuilding the interior the house became Rennie's Landing. And Nathan couldn't be happier.

"Other than the fact that it's not on 13th street," he says, "I don't think we could ask for a better spot."

Although, Nathan and his associates had incorporated the name of the business — Taylor's Coffee Shop — and they decided against selling it to the Taylor brothers when they moved out.

The Taylors, of course, wanted to keep their name in the business, and so the name Old Taylor's became etched on their front door. "It's the only way we could get around the legal thing and still use our name," Todd says.

At Old Taylor's the emphasis is on an improved food service. Though they have kept pretty much the same menu as the previous Taylor's, Todd says all of the items are being prepared "much more professionally, thanks to Bob, our ace-in-the-hole cook." Todd also plans to extend the breakfast menu. "If you can come in here and dream up an omelette, I want to be able to cook it for you," he says.

Nathan says the new facilities at Rennie's allows his food service to be "a lot faster and more efficient. And the addition of a char-broiler makes our burgers taste a lot better."

Further emphasis at Rennie's is on attracting their old clientele, as well as bringing new customers in — "people who might have felt intimidated about coming to Taylor's," Nathan says. "We're keeping the same types of business ideas that we've always had, and that's what will make Rennie's have the atmosphere that people like."

Both Todd and Nathan hope the confusion between the two taverns will soon die down. Todd recalls that during the period when they were refinishing the interior of Taylor's his wife was approached by a couple of people who asked of the whereabouts of the "real" Taylor's. His wife pointed to Todd and his brothers. "Those guys there are the real Taylors," she said. "Oh bullshit," they replied. "You guys aren't Taylors."

"That hurts," Todd says, "because we grew up right here. This is our home. There shouldn't be this confusion on who the Taylors really are. Taylor's is on the corner of 13th and Kincaid — right where we belong."

"We want to be known as Rennie's Landing," Nathan says. "We're the same people from the Taylor's of old — we've just moved our business down the street."

By Kirk Knighton
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