Many Kirksville residents can recollect going downtown to see a movie. Before or after the movie they would walk over to the White Cabin for a nickel hamburger and a Coca-Cola.

The White Cabin was built in 1927 by G. D. Whiteside. It was a small, stucco frame building, 12 feet by 16 feet. According to Mr. Whiteside, it cost $800 to build and took about three days to complete. The White Cabin started out with just an eight-stool counter. In 1929 Mr. Whiteside added eight more stools.

In 1930 he started selling ice cream and moved the original building from the corner of the block to the area next to the alley. He sold only ice cream, malts, shakes, and the like in the structure. At the same time, he built a new building with a basement and a few booths on the corner spot.

The White Cabin was located on the corner of Jefferson and Elson. With the osteopathic college across the street, it was a very popular restaurant. It was situated so that anyone in the downtown area could walk over and order a cup of coffee and a hamburger. There would always be people there that they knew and could talk to. Mr. Whiteside can remember how busy he was when the osteopathic college had noon recess. He would just pull the lever on the coffee urn and run one cup after another through. He didn’t have to worry about the cups piling up because there was always someone there waiting for another cup of coffee.

White Cabin hamburgers were a nickel each and on Saturdays a person could buy a sack of six for a quarter. This special was the reason for the sign on top of the building, "Buy ‘Em By The Sack." On orders over fifteen cents, Mr. Whiteside would deliver. His Austin delivery cars accumulated many miles in the early years.

On Fridays the White Cabin ordered 1,200 hamburger buns from the Palace Bakery. By Monday they needed to order 500 more. Everybody loved hamburgers and the White Cabin had them.

The price of hamburgers was kept at a nickel until World War II when Mr. Whiteside had to increase the price to a dime due to meat rationing. Even though the price doubled, quite a few were still sold. The price of hamburgers stayed at a dime until 1952.

In 1952 Mr. Whiteside leased the building to Dolly and Raymond Cross. Many people liked Mrs. Cross because she was so friendly. If you had gone into the White Cabin then, most likely you would have seen her. She was always around the White Cabin during the day and most of the night.

Mrs. Margaret Parrish worked for Mrs. Cross in 1955 and 1956 as a waitress. She liked working there with Mrs. Cross. Since she was working her way through college she had to work nights. There were only three or four employees that worked at night: one or two waitresses, a cook, and a dishwasher. Mrs. Parrish recalls the cook as a tiny, older woman who was easy to get along with, "She was a good cook and people liked her cooking."

The White Cabin stayed open until midnight giving everyone a chance to stop by. The majority of customers were KCOM and KSTC students. Mrs. Parrish recalls that they did
Above: In 1933 the original building was moved next to the alley to sell ice cream. Mr. Whiteside and his daughter stand beside one of the Austin delivery cars. Right: G. D. Whiteside and his family pose in the White House Ice Cream Parlor.
not have any drunks or hooligans in the White Cabin. Never was there an uproar or scuffle, just people wanting to grab a bite to eat.

Mrs. Parrish recalls humorous events that happened to new employees. A new waitress was required to make a milkshake and it was to be thick. The new girl put the glass on the machine and left it for quite some time. Mrs. Parrish asked her, “Don’t you think that shake is done by now?” The waitress replied that it was to be thick. Mrs. Parrish retorted, “Honey, you’re going in the opposite way. That shake is so thin that it’s nothing but milk!”

The cooler, the automatic dishwasher, and the potato peeling machine were downstairs in the basement. One of the duties of the dishwasher was to prepare the potatoes for the next day. Mrs. Parrish recalls a time that the dishwasher left the potatoes in the machine too long. The peeling machine was similar to a sander, shaving off the peeling very quickly. When he returned, the potatoes were no bigger than a quarter!

In 1958 Eldon Yantis leased the White Cabin. He operated it for a few years and then Mr. Whiteside and his son-in-law, Harold VanSickle, ran it for awhile. In 1968 Bill LaCore leased the White Cabin and ran it until its closing in 1972.

In 1972 the White Cabin was sold to the Sandy’s fast-food chain. The fast-food era was entering Kirksville, Missouri, and the time of cafes and small restaurants was leaving.

By Dan Sullivan
Terry Baker

April, 1972, the White Cabin building was replaced by the modern steel and glass housing for Sandy’s. The sign for Sandy’s was placed in the same spot that the White Cabin building had stood. About three years later, the Sandy’s chain sold out to Hardee’s fast-food chain. Hardee’s kept the same building and are still in operation there today.

Although G. D. Whiteside was not always associated with the White Cabin after leasing it, he is best known for it. He remembers that in those early years he bought beef by the dressed carcass and ground it himself. “We sold a pretty fair size herd of cattle each year,” said Mr. Whiteside. Recalling the demolition of the White Cabin, Mr. Whiteside said, “It kinda gave me the jitters to see them tearing it down. I almost wished I hadn’t sold it.” The people of Kirksville will always hold the White Cabin dear to their hearts. They will never forget the White Cabin and neither will Mr. Whiteside.

Above: The White Cabin stood at the corner of Jefferson and Elson from 1927 until it was demolished in 1972. Only the sign was left intact. (Photo courtesy of Kirksville Daily Express)

Top right: The White Cabin as it looked in 1955. Notice the neon light fixtures and the sign that reads “air conditioned.” Mrs. Margaret Parrish, an employee of Dolly Cross, worked her way through college here in 1955 and 1956. Bottom right: A public thank you from G. D. Whiteside to the people of Kirksville in 1972. The white box in the center is the reminiscent menu for the White Cabin in 1927. (Photo courtesy of Kirksville Daily Express)