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### Eating at Yale, 1701-1965

Loomis Havemeyer

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**EATING AT YALE  
1701 - 1965**

by  
**LOOMIS HAVEMEYER**

**Yale University  
December 1965**

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## FOREWORD

For years eating at Yale was an unpleasant procedure. From the beginnings of the Collegiate School in Saybrook in 1701 until it moved to New Haven in 1716, students ate at the houses of the Rectors and the Tutors. In 1718 the first college building ("Yale College") was erected, a combination dormitory and Commons where the students were required to eat. In later years other Commons were built, but in all of them, if we can believe the reports, the food was sub-standard if not actually bad. The students rebelled and threw over-ripe meat or rancid butter around the rooms or out of the windows. There were many food riots, some of them serious.

The Commons continued in "Yale College" until that building was torn down in 1782. Meanwhile, a second dining hall was established in Connecticut Hall after its erection in 1752. The first separate Commons was operated in a structure on the site of the present McClellan Hall from 1782 to 1820, and the second Commons (1820-1842) occupied the ground floor of the Philosophical Building (also known as the Cabinet). In 1827 a cheaper dining hall, conducted in a wooden building on High Street (on the site of Chittenden Hall), began operations contemporaneously with the second Commons. In 1866 this same building was used to house an eating club managed by a steward

chosen by the faculty from the Senior class. During the years when there was no officially-managed Commons (1842-1901), the students ate in such clubs, operated by students or townspeople, and some continued to do so even after the building of the present University Dining Hall, which was constructed as part of the Bicentennial Buildings in 1901, until the establishment of the Residential Colleges in the 1930's. But a few years before this, Yale College fraternities had built elaborate houses. The food in the colleges and fraternities was excellent, and, for the first time, gracious living came to Yale.

I wish to express my thanks to Reuben A. Holden and George D. Vaill for reading the manuscript and making valuable suggestions. Mr. Vaill did a vast amount of research on accounts of early Yale graduates of their experience in eating at Yale. I have incorporated these, thus making the picture more meaningful. For his time and efforts I am deeply grateful.

Loomis Havemeyer

## EATING AT YALE

1701 - 1965

In 1701 ten Connecticut clergymen met in Branford, and each gave an armful of books from his meager store, announcing, "I give these books for the founding of a college in this Colony." The same year the State Legislature passed an act of liberty to erect a "Collegiate School" where in youth "might be instructed in the Arts and Sciences" and "fitted for Public employment in Church and Civill State." In the fall of that year seven trustees met in Saybrook and organized the College under the direction of the Rev. Abraham Pierson. The College remained there for fifteen years, but much of the work was done elsewhere. Pierson lived at his home in Killingworth (now Clinton) and taught students there, and his successor, the Rev. Samuel Andrew, stayed at his house in Milford and kept the seniors with him for nine years. The students must have had their meals with these two men. The underclassmen were in Saybrook under two tutors.

Such arrangements were not satisfactory, and in 1716 the Trustees voted a leave of absence until the next Commencement for such as wished to study elsewhere. The majority

went to Wethersfield, Hartford, and East Guiford, but a few remained in Saybrook.

In 1716 the Collegiate School moved to New Haven, whose citizens had contributed more land and money to have the school in their midst. The first degrees were awarded there in 1717. At this time all of the students were brought together in one place.

At first the students lived and ate where they could, for there were no college buildings. But in 1718 one was erected on the corner of College and Chapel Streets, called "Yale College." It was three stories high and contained a hall, a library, a chapel, a lecture hall, and twenty-two student rooms with accommodations for sixty-six students. At the back was a kitchen connected with the hall which was the Commons.

The price for food, sweeping, and making the beds was four shillings and four pence a man a week. The students complained of the quality and preparation of the food, and so the steward, who had just been appointed, resigned, and a woman cook replaced him.

"In 1742, the following bill of fare was established:  
'Ordered that the steward shall provide the commons for the scholars as follows, vis, for breakfast one loaf of bread for four, which (the dough) shall weigh one pound. For dinner for four, one loaf of bread as aforesaid, two and a half pounds



of beef, veal, or mutton, or one and three-quarter pounds salt port about twice a week in the summer time; one quart of beer; two pennyworth of sauce (vegetable). For supper for four, two quarts of milk and one loaf of bread, when milk can conveniently be had, and when it cannot, then apple pie, which shall be made of one and three-fourth pounds of dough, one-quarter pound hog's fat, two ounces sugar, and one peck of apples.'" <sup>1</sup>

"From contemporary comment, it appears that the 'pye' also contained a generous portion of bone, gristle, and fat; and the most eminent quality of its crust was a leathery consistency." <sup>2</sup>

The Buttery, which existed as an appendage to the Commons, was in the charge of a butler who was a recent graduate and in whom the authorities had great confidence. He had the right to sell cider, strong beer to the amount of twelve barrels annually, loaf sugar, pipes, and tobacco. No student might buy cider and beer elsewhere. He also sold books, stationery, and fresh fruit.

The Buttery was established to try to regulate what could not be repressed, such as eating between meals and thus destroying appetites for the regular food served. It gave the stu-

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1 Woolsey, Theodore D. "Historical Address" p 43.

2 "Puritan Protagonist: President Thomas Clap of Yale College" by Louis Leonard Tucker (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1962), p 235.

dents special foods such as they enjoyed at home. The place became a rendezvous for the indolent and disorderly, where idle gossip and noise prevailed. It was abolished in 1817.

In the basement of the Commons, space was rented to students so that they could store apples and cider. The Tutors had locked closets which were occasionally invaded. In order to try to improve the morals of students, the following rule was passed in 1722: "Agreed that if any undergraduate shall bring, or cause to be brought into the college any quantity of rum or other strong liquors without the leave of the Rector or Tutor, and be therewith convicted, he shall be degraded."

The Laws of the College, passed in 1745 (and preserved for us to this day in manuscript form in the handwriting of Ezra Stiles, then a Senior), set forth the rules governing the Steward and the College Commons:

" 1. That the Steward appointed by the President & Fellows Shall provide Commons for the Scholars in Such a manner as hath been heretofore Ordered, and Shall recieve Such allowance therefor as Shall from Time to Time be Stated by the President & Fellows or their Committee.

" 2. That Every Student who resides in College Shall be in Commons, except the Waiters appointed by the President; and the Batchellors half the time, &

none Shall be put out but by a Note from the President or One of ye Tutors, and that only on Tuesdays & Frydays, except in case of Sickness or Such Extraordinary Occasion, which Note Shall be Delivered to the Butler on the Evening proceeding or before Seven o' the clock next morning.

" 3. That at Dinner the waiters Shall recieve the Victuals at the Kitchen Hatch, and Set them upon the Tables in the Hall, which Shall be covered with decent Linnen-Cloaths washed once a Week at the Procurement of the Steward: and the Tutors or Senior Scholars Present Shall ask a Blessing and Return Thanks, and all the Scholars while at Dinner Shall attend decently and orderly: and abstain from all rude & clamorous Talk. And no Victuals or Platers Shall be carried out of the Hall but in case of Sickness or the like and that with the leave of One of the Tutors. Neither Shall any Scholars go out of the Hall before Thanks are Returned: and when Dinner is over the Waiters Shall return the Platters & Cloaths into the Kitchen, on Penalty of Six Pence for any Break of this Law. The like Order Shall be observed at Supper when They have hot Victuals."

Among the other directives given to the Steward was one which required him to see that "...the Kitchen & all the Utensils Shall be kept Neat & Sweet."

The duties of the College Butler were, at the same time, prescribed in the Laws:

" 1. That the Butler Shall from time to time keep an account of all Such as are in Commons: and Shall Deal out the Stewards Bread & Bear for Commons & Sizing; and for his Trouble Shall be Paid Seven Shillings a Quarter by the Steward. And the Butler Shall have all the Lost Commons of Bread and Bear, for which & other Privileges he Shall pay to the College Two Pounds Ten Shillings per Annum."

Although the Steward apparently had to furnish the "platters" for Commons, each student was required to "provide for himself a Knife and Fork, a common Spoon and Tea Spoon and Dish."

In 1756, Dexter <sup>1</sup> reports, "some new regulations for the government of the students were passed, a single one of which may be cited, in illustration of the rest: —

" 'Whereas many of the Students have wasted much of their Precious Time in going to each others Chambers and Drinking Tea in the afternoon:

" 'It is ordered that if any Student shall Drink Tea out of his own Chamber in studying time in the afternoon,

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1 "Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History" by Franklin Bowditch Dexter, M. A. (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1896), Vol. II, p 402.

he shall be fined one Shilling.' "

An alarming incident in April of 1764 was described in a letter written to Ezra Stiles, then a resident of Newport, by his father-in-law in New Haven: "Last Saturday being at Court, about noon we were surprised with a very melancholly Story from College. 82 of the Students were seized with violent Vomitings, great Thirst, Weakness in the Extremities and some with Spasms, and other Symptoms of Poison. By the Use of Emetics, Oleaginous and mucilaginous Draughts they are recovered, saving that some are yet weak in their joynts and affected in their Eyes. The Physicians conjecture it to be Arsenic, mixed with the Cake, on which they all Breakfasted. The French People are very generally suspected. There has been as yet no Enquiry by the Civil Authority, hoping Something may transpire that may be taken hold of."

"Another contemporaneous account," said Dexter, "in the Journal of Seth Coleman, then a Junior, states that there were then 92 students boarding in the College Hall, 82 of whom were seized, besides two of the tutors and one of the cooks.

"The persons to whom suspicion was directed were some families of exiled Acadians who had been sent to this Colony; but a more deliberate judgment tended to acquit them of the charge. President Clap has left on record the result of his investigations, which was that the cause was 'either

some accident or some strong Physic put into the Victuals with a Design to bring a Slur upon the Provisions made in the Hall. . . Specially since it appears under oath that some of the Scholars manifested a pleasure at what befell the Commons as hoping that it might be a means of getting Rid of them, and one of them went to one of the Cooks on the Lords day and offered her a Dollar if she would poison or Physic the Commons again, provided she would let him know the time, and added that if it was done once more there would be an end of Commons.' It is highly probable, therefore, that the incident was merely a move in the long struggle on the part of the students against College Commons.

"The Faculty took action a little later (June 22), as follows: —

" 'To guard the Kitchen from Damage & Danger, it is ordered that no Person whatsoever, except the Officers of College, the Waiters in the Hall, the Cooks & approved Servants in the Kitchen, of which none shall be French, shall be allowed to go into the College Kitchen & Brew-House at any Time or upon any Occasion whatsoever.' " <sup>1</sup>

If the French servants were actually responsible for the poisoning, there is nothing in the records to show that they

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p 58.

were formally accused. A more likely suspicion points to the students, who wanted to discredit the food. "This supposition is confirmed by the fact that the poison was of so light a character that its bad effects yielded readily to 'Oleaginous and mucilaginous Draughts,' remedies which appear, in the perspective of a century and a half, as much more to be feared than the ills they were intended to cure!"<sup>1</sup>

Louis Leonard Tucker, in his biography of President Clap, writes: "The most distinctive feature of the food served at Yale, aside from its skiminess, was its monotonous uniformity. It was fare without benefit of dietetics. Students during Clap's time would have understood the motivational impulse that inspired a Yale youth of a later period to write in the margin of a library book: 'Sottmeet and mustard for Dinner and for Dinner 1800 times over.' Gathered together in the college hall, the boys were confronted with provender designed primarily to alleviate hunger pangs and solidly fill the stomach cavity, and only incidentally to propitiate the taste..."<sup>2</sup>

Occasional relief from the monotony of bread, beer, and pie was offered "with the inclusion of cheeses and puddings. Many of the students paid their tuition fees with pro-

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1 | "Memorials of Eminent Yale Men" by Anson Phelps Stokes (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1914), Vol. II, p 176.

2† Tucker: "Puritan Protagonist" pp 234-5.

visions, the bulk of which eventually found its way into the commons. . . the meals were decidedly unbalanced, with a pronounced leaning toward starchy foods, which were miserably prepared and unappetizing." <sup>1</sup>

A Yale manuscript which chronicles Faculty Judgments relates a typical undergraduate misdemeanor in 1765, in which a student threw some pieces of cheese across the dining room. The tutor then in charge remonstrated with the boy for his "indecent Action and Waste of the Cheese." As the tutor was about to depart at the end of the meal, the same student "violently threw a hard Piece of Cheese" which barely missed the tutor's head. Summoned before the President to account for his action, the boy stated that the cheese had been intended for a classmate — but that his aim had been faulty. This excuse was demolished by the revelation that the classmate had been sitting nowhere near the tutor but "at the opposite Part of the Hall." The miscreant, according to the Judgment, "offered nothing further in Extenuation of his Crimes."

Undergraduate actions varied little between New Haven and Cambridge, and Yale had its share of the kind of meal-time conduct which was recorded by a Harvard historian concerning a freshman-sophomore food riot on the banks of the Charles:

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1 Op. cit. , pp 235-6



". . . Nathan threw a piece of bread,  
And hit Abijah on the head.  
The wrathful Freshman, in a trice,  
Sent back another bigger slice;  
Which, being butter'd pretty well,  
Made greasy work where'er it fell.  
And thus arose a fearful battle;  
The coffee-cups and saucers rattle;  
The bread-bowls fly at woful rate,  
And break many a learned pate. . ." <sup>1</sup>

In 1776 the scarcities occasioned by the Revolutionary War made it impossible for the Steward to provide board for the students, and for more than two years they were quartered in Cheshire, Farmington, and Glastonbury. Even after they had resumed residence on the campus, the shortages continued, and "The Steward was finally obliged, in September, 1778, to advertise in the public prints, requesting 'the Parents and Guardians of the Students to assist in furnishing a supply of Provisions.' " <sup>2</sup>

There were, of course, occasions when the bill-of-fare was expanded in honor of a special event. Dexter <sup>3</sup> reports

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- 1 Quoted in Morison, "Three Centuries of Harvard" pp 208-9.
  - 2 Stokes, "Memorials of Eminent Yale Men" Vol. II, p 190.
  - 3 Dexter, "Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History" Vol. IV, pp 375-6.

a memorandum in the College records listing the articles used for the Commencement Dinner on September 14, 1785:

140 lb. Flour @ 2d 1/4 -----	1. 6. 3
67 lb. Fresh Pork @ 4d -----	1. 2. 4
10 1/2 lb. Lamb @ 4d -----	3. 6
20 lb. Butter @ 10d -----	16. 8
2 doz. Fowls @ 10d -----	1.
20 lb. Salt pork - 8d -----	13. 4
5 Bushlls. Apples - 1/6 -----	7. 6
1 Bushll beats -----	4.
Cabbage -----	5.
Potatoes -----	3.
Spices -----	6.
Pepper ---- 2/3      Salt 2/ -----	4. 3
Vinegar 1/6      Pickles 3/ -----	4. 6
Hogslard, 10 lb. 6/-    2 Load Wood 18/--	1. 4.
1 lb. Candles 11d    Soap 2/- -----	2. 11
1 Woman 3 days @ 3/- -----	9.
1 do. 2 1/2 Days to Scour 3/6 -----	8. 9
2 Men 6 Days each @ 4/- -----	2. 8.
1 Barrell Cyder -----	8.
6 Gallns old do. -----	6.
12 lb. Cheese 6d -----	6.
110 lb. Beef @ 3 1/2d -----	1. 12. 1
Use of Platters, plates, Table Cloths, &c.	
Sundry small things -----	2. 0.
To my Time & Trouble in preparing -----	3. 10.
	<hr/>
	19. 11. 1

Erros Excepted      Jeremiah Atwater  
Steward

In 1782 a new Commons was built on the site of McClellan Hall, and in 1820 another one was established on the first floor of the Cabinet building. In one eating hall were seniors and sophomores, in the other juniors and freshmen. The Tu-

tors sat at raised tables on three sides of the halls. When a bell was rung, the students entered and remained standing during grace, but it was reported that during the delivery, two forks were sticking into each potato on the table.

At times the food was not good; at times it was positively bad, and the students showed their displeasure by throwing the boiled beef on the floor and the rancid butter out of the windows and by littering the grounds outside with broken crockery and tea pots. In 1819 the two lower classes rebelled and did not go to classes for three days. "Their specifications included drunkenness of the steward, insolence of the cooks and waiters, ham of mighty but malodorous strength, ill-washed dishes, infirm coffee, a 'graft' in which the steward sold the commons pie to outsiders, entertainment of loose and mixed company in the kitchen and undue kitchen perquisites for the Tutor's table."<sup>1</sup>

When a cheaper Commons was established on the site of Chittenden Hall in 1827, at fifty cents less than the regular Commons, the poorer students ate there. Since good behavior was required, there were no disorders such as characterized the other dining halls.

Contemporary accounts give a vivid picture of Yale eating. William Jay, B. A. 1807, the son of Chief Justice John

1 Deming, Clarence, "Yale Yesterdays" p 62 (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1915).

Jay, recalled: "Our meals were taken in a large hall with a kitchen opening into it. The students were arranged at tables according to their classes. All sat on wooden benches, not excepting the tutors; the latter had a table to themselves on an elevated platform whence they had a view of the whole company. But it was rather difficult for them to attend to their plates and to watch two hundred boys at the same time. Salt beef once a day and dry cod were perhaps the most usual dishes. On Sunday mornings during the winter our breakfast-tables were graced with large tin milk-cans filled with stewed oysters; at the proper season we were occasionally treated at dinner with green peas. As you may suppose, a goodly number of waiters were needed in the hall. These were all students, and many of them among the best and most esteemed scholars." <sup>1</sup>

The students sometimes became involved in the management of Commons. In his sophomore year, Samuel F. B. Morse, of the Class of 1810, was chosen to be on a committee to settle some difficulties:

"We had a new affair here a few days ago," he wrote. "The College cooks were arraigned before the tribunal of the students, consisting of a committee of four from each class in college; I was chosen as one of the committee from the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Stokes, "Memorials of Eminent Yale Men" Vol. I, pp 138-9.

Sophomore class. We sent for two of the worst cooks, and were all Saturday afternoon in trying them; found them guilty of several charges, such as being insolent to the students, not exerting themselves to cook clean for us, in concealing pies which belonged to the students, having suppers at midnight, and inviting all their neighbors and friends to sup with them at the expense of the students and this not once in a while, but almost every night." <sup>1</sup>

In 1828 the conditions in Commons were especially bad, and the Steward was told to remedy the situation, but nothing was improved. Thereupon arose what the historians call the "Bread and Butter Rebellion." The students refused to go to Commons or attend any recitations or any college exercise until conditions were bettered. They met with President Day, but he said that while they were in rebellion against the laws of the College, their complaints would not be discussed. The students declared that they would continue their course until the faculty met their demands. Five of the leaders were told they would have to obey the laws or be expelled. Four refused and left at once. At a meeting held on Hillhouse Avenue, a valedictory was delivered by one of the expelled students, who then pledged themselves to deathless friendship with each other. They came down to the college yard with

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Stokes, "Memorials of Eminent Yale Men" Vol. II, p 112.

all the other students. There, kneeling in a great circle, they sang a song written for the occasion to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne." When the dismissed students got back home, the fever passed, and in a few weeks they were back in college, having agreed to conditions laid down by the faculty.<sup>1</sup>

Samuel J. Tilden, of the Class of 1837, "did not room in college, but had lodgings with a Mr. Gardner on Court Street, below the Tontine Hotel. He started boarding in Commons, but the menu of the day did not satisfy his very delicate digestion: 'I am nearly convinced that I shall be obliged to give up boarding at Commons. I have had two days' experience, and will give you our bill of fare. Day before yesterday morning we had a dish of meat, very fresh bread and butter, coffee, and nothing else whatever. At dinner, boiled shad and potatoes, fresh bread and butter and rice pudding, enough for those who could eat such things. At tea, fresh bread and butter and cheese and some molasses cake, which by the bye, comes only occasionally. The next morning, shad and potatoes and fresh bread and butter again. Either of these articles I could sometimes eat, but could not do it constantly. I have not been as well as common for a few days; and when I study, it is necessary to diet with more

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1 Much of the foregoing was taken from Kingsley, William L., "Yale College" (Henry Holt & Co., 1879), Vol. I.

care than when engaged in other employments, or in nothing. The bread has been uniformly newly baked, and, as I think of all the New Haven bread I have seen, slackly baked, and yesterday it was scarcely cold; and I could procure no other. I shall see to-day what I can do, and unless I can be assured of well-done and stale bread shall board with Mr. Goodman. Perhaps it is best to do so at once. The butter is very good. Commons has been a favorite object of undergraduate criticism at Yale for almost two centuries — as indeed it is always apt to be at every college — but Tilden's attack differs from most. It is mainly based on the fact that the bread is not sufficiently stale!"<sup>1</sup>

Another contemporary account was given by Sylvester Judd, B. A., 1836: "We board in commons; that is, some hundred or hundred and fifty students eat on the lower floor of a building, partitioned into rooms, connected by doors. Our fare is good, but we have noise and confusion without end. While the blessing is being asked at one table, there will be rapping, ringing bells, and hollering for 'Waiter, waiter,' at another. This mixture of noise and sacred things is sometimes too great for my risibles, so that I am obliged to laugh in spite of myself."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Stokes, "Memorials of Eminent Yale Men" Vol. II, pp 213-4.

2 Quoted in op. cit., p 276.

Donald Grant Mitchell, of the Class of 1841, recalling his undergraduate days fifty years later, wrote of early-morning recitations, after which there "came the rush, not over eager, or with much Apician zest, to our 'Commons' breakfast of half-past seven, under the benignant mastership of 'Caleb Mix, Steward.' If a boarder was ill and proper word came to this Benignity of the Commons, there was sent out a little brown pot, with white parallel stripes (capacity 3 gills) of coffee and milk, with two slices of bread atop of it. And even such a breakfast I did sometimes devour with gusto — when the snows were too deep, or the way not clear, for a clandestine slip down Chapel street to 'Marm Dean's,' (next above what is now Traeger's) for her better coffee and an unctuous bit of her buttered waffles." <sup>1</sup>

In 1842 the Commons was given up. To take its place, there arose numerous eating clubs that lasted for a longer or shorter time depending on the quality of the food and the energy of the steward.

"The steward, usually a poor man, engaged some woman, accustomed to the business, to supply a dining room, dishes, table furniture and waiters, and to do the cooking for his proposed club. For this, he agreed to pay her a certain price per plate -- not including his own, which was free --

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1 Quoted in Stokes, "Memorials of Eminent Yale Men" Vol. I, p 161.



and engaged that the club shall be a certain minimum number as to size. A steward had little difficulty in making up a crowd among freshmen, who were unacquainted with one another, and so without likes or dislikes. Those who had been acquaintances at a large preparatory school, however, sometimes joined together in a club, or formed the nucleus for one, when they first came to college, . . . The steward occupied the 'head of the table,' did the carving whenever necessary, and gave his orders to the market man each day for the provisions needed the day following, -- consulting in doing this the expressed wishes of a majority of the club, and warning them when their demands were bringing up the price of board above the estimated amount." <sup>1</sup>

Frequently the members of a club made up their own crowd and decided who should be admitted. Neither the hostess nor the steward could secure the admission of a new member without the consent of the others. The club adopted its own rules of table etiquette, and no woman was admitted.

Often the members were dissatisfied with the food or the price, and so they moved to newly-organized clubs or to reorganized old ones. At the end of freshman year, the popular men would drift into one or more clubs. Each one of the junior fraternities might have a club of its own where the

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1 "Four Years at Yale" by a graduate of '69 (Lyman Bagg) p 239.

men pledged the year before were admitted. Each club had a name, some of them fantastic, such as "Vultures," "Dyspeptics," "Frolicsome Oysters," "Fowl Fiends," "Merry Eaters," or "Knights of the Knife and Fork."

In 1866 the college authorities started a club to furnish food at cost price for students who could not afford one of the regular clubs. The price was \$4 a week, and, while the food was not good, it was better than could be obtained elsewhere for the same price. In the other clubs the prices ranged from \$6 to \$7.

For years the eating clubs continued, but they gradually lost their fantastic names.

The Sheff fraternity houses started in 1886 with the Cloister. Through the years seven other large buildings were put up, but no meals were served; the students merely lived there.

The Yale College fraternities had only "tombs" for meetings, and it was not until the mid-1920's that they built club houses on Fraternity Row between York and Park Streets. There, with dining rooms and kitchens, they began to serve meals.

In 1901 the present Commons (University Dining Hall) was built as one of the Bicentennial Buildings. There the freshmen ate -- and others if they wished. The charge at first was \$3.25 a week, which paid for linen, service, tea,

coffee, cocoa, milk, bread and butter, fruit, and vegetables. In addition there was an a la carte service from which anything in season might be ordered, at extra cost. A vegetarian might live well on the fixed charges, and a reasonable amount of meat might be added for \$1.50 per week.

On York Street at the corner of Chapel was the University Club, with members drawn from both Yale College and Sheff. This was not, however, for the common man. Only the very wealthy could afford to belong. In Sheff this applied almost exclusively to the fraternity members. The prices were high, but the meals were good.

Most of the undergraduates had to depend on private eating "joints," and this continued until the residential colleges were built in the 1930's.

Scattered around the University were houses which were either owned or rented by respectable New England women who ran student dining rooms. Scholarship students were given their meals free in such places in return for persuading other students to eat there, collecting the bills, and supervising student waiters during meals. The "runner" who could picture in the most glowing terms the good food and low prices of his particular eating house would, for a time, get the patronage. But students were restless and moved frequently around the circle -- either to be with friends or to partake of the better food on the other side of the fence, about which they

had heard whispers.

The average board was about \$5 a week in 1907. When they could stand the food no longer, boarders took an evening off and dined at one of the numerous restaurants in town.

As a rule, a fraternity group occupied a table at one of these clubs, but not always with the same personnel; or there might be several fraternity tables in a house where non-fraternity men also ate.

St. Anthony had a small club in a boarding house at the corner of Wall and York Streets. The board was \$10 a week, but the food was excellent.

In 1917, a unique eating club was started, and it remained in operation until 1934, the year after seven of the Residential Colleges were opened. Professor Bertram B. Boltwood and I had, for several years, been dining at clubs, hotels, and restaurants, for neither of us wanted to set up housekeeping. It occurred to us that there might be a small group of undergraduates and faculty members who wanted to live as we did and not worry about the cost. Miss Barton, who ran the small rooming house at 90 Wall Street where I lived, was approached on the subject and gladly agreed to run the club in her basement dining room. There was no difficulty in gathering twelve members who were tired of their usual eating places. In 1921 the group moved to a much more elaborate house at 347 Temple Street, where a large, gracious

dining room was furnished with a long mahogany table and twelve high-backed chairs. Service was provided by two cooks and two butlers in addition to the housekeeper.

While three meals a day were served, it was the dinner which became the function of great importance. The table was always set with flowers, candy, and nuts, and the members dined by candlelight. There were four courses, with Professor Boltwood and myself carving the roasts at either end of the table. Afterwards coffee was served in the big living room, and the members often remained all evening talking, playing cards, or studying.

The original membership was made up of one faculty member besides Professor Boltwood and me, and nine undergraduates from Cloister, St. Anthony, and St. Elmo. From time to time, however, our members returned after graduation and continued as graduate students to eat with us, so that during these years there were fewer undergraduates; but this disadvantage was counterbalanced by the more mature point of view of these "older" men.

The selection of new members each year was difficult; there were many criteria to be considered. In the first place, a man had to be able and willing to pay his bill as soon as it was presented. No regular amount was charged, but at the beginning of each month the wages and tradesmen's statements were added up, and the total was divided by twelve - roughly

\$20 a week per man, depending on how well we had eaten. Moreover, a student was required to have a sense of humor. It was not easy to find such members. When one of our men was planning to be absent for dinner, we invited a prospective candidate in his place. The process was more selective than any fraternity rushing, as we realized a misfit would make it uncomfortable for all of us.

If some of our members were to be away on Sunday noon, we invited such guests as President and Mrs. Angell and faculty members with their wives. Students dressed more formally in those days than they do today, and frequently they would appear for these Sunday dinners in cutaways.

The value of this club for the members extended far beyond good food and leisurely meals - however important they may have been. Conversation around the table was exciting. All sorts of topics were brought up and discussed at length, sometimes far into the evening. A student would say, "Professor So-and-So made this statement in class, with which I do not agree . . ." - and then the battle was on. We were doing in a small way what it was hoped the Residential Colleges would accomplish: bring the students into intimate contact with the faculty, so that each could profit by discussion with the other. After graduation, many of our members wrote back that they had got more real education at our club than from their classes. Others even said that the hours they

spent in the club meant more to them than anything else in their college careers.

It was a genuine blow to us all when 347 Temple Street was torn down in 1934 to make way for Timothy Dwight College, and our club - which had never even had a name - was disbanded.

In the 1920's all the Yale College fraternities built elaborate club houses around Fraternity Row on York Street. They all had bars, dining halls, and kitchens. For the first time, the members had a place where they could eat good food in attractive surroundings. Every night there were 40 to 50 for dinner. Informal breakfasts were served every day.

In the 1930's the ten Residential Colleges were built to house the three upper classes. Each one had a large dining hall and kitchen. Eating proved to be a pleasure, for the excellence of the food dispelled any misgivings felt by the students who had previously taken their meals in fraternities or other eating places. There were choices for each course. As one sat down, a waitress presented a menu and an order slip, and each course was brought in separately on the College china. There was also linen and the College silver to lend distinction.

The menus were similar in all of the Colleges. Here are three samples:

**BREAKFAST**

**7:15 to 8:30**

**Grapefruit**

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**Apricots**

**Shredded Wheat  
Corn Flakes  
Crumbles**

**Ralston's**

**Rice Krispies  
Puffed Wheat  
Grape Nuts**

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**Creamed Eggs and Ham on Toast  
Poached or Boiled Eggs**

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**Toast**

**Jelly**

**Muffins**

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**Coffee**

**Tea**

**Cocoa**

**Milk**

**Thursday, May 13, 1937**



LUNCHEON

12:15 to 1:30

Vegetable Soup  
French, Rye, Raisin, Whole Wheat Bread  
Cherry Muffins

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No. 1 Mixed Grill  
No. 2 Assorted Cold Cuts of Meat Relish  
Corn au Gratin

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Head Lettuce Salad, French, or Tango Dressing

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Vanilla Ice Cream, Fruit Sauce  
Cheese Butter Wafers

-----

Coffee Tea Cocoa Milk

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Tomato Juice 10 Fresh Orange Juice 15  
Half Grapefruit 10  
Sliced Banana with Cream 10  
Pineapple Sundae 15  
Chocolate Sundae 15  
French Toast with Jelly or Syrup 15  
Broiled Tenderloin Steak 20 Min. 70  
Broiled Loin Lamb Chops 20 Min. 60  
Crackers and Cheese 15

Choice of Dry Cereals, Crackers and Milk served  
in place of Meats or Desserts

Saturday, May 22, 1937

DINNER

6:00 to 7:00

Okra and Tomato Soup  
French, Rye, Raisin, Whole Wheat Bread

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No. 1 Broiled Sirloin Steak  
No. 2 Assorted Cold Cuts of Meat  
Parsley Buttered Potatoes Fresh Green Beans

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Lettuce Salad Bowl  
French or Russian Dressing

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Vanilla Ice Cream, Butterscotch Sauce  
Cheese Butter Wafers

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Coffee Tea Cocoa Milk

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Tomato Juice 10 Fresh Orange Juice 15  
Sliced Banana with Cream 10  
Half Grapefruit 10  
Pineapple Sundae 15  
Chocolate Sundae 15  
Broiled Loin Lamb Chops 20 Min. 60  
Broiled Tenderloin Steak 20 Min. 70  
French Toast with Jelly or Syrup 15  
Crackers and Cheese 15

Choice of Dry Cereals, Crackers and Milk  
Served in Place of Meats or Desserts

Thursday, November 18, 1937

Afterwards the conversation between the Fellows and students would go on so long that the head waitress would remind them that it was time to close the dining hall.

As a Fellow of Timothy Dwight, I knew more about that College than about the others. During the early years, once every month or six weeks, a formal dinner was held, attended by the Fellows and students. There was usually an eminent speaker. James Grafton Rogers, the Master, because of his Washington connections (Assistant Secretary of State under President Hoover) was able to bring outstanding government figures, ambassadors, or writers. The list of visitors during this time was impressive and included such people as Justice Owen J. Roberts of the Supreme Court, Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of State, and Joseph C. Grew, Ambassador to Japan.

Every other Monday night the Fellows had cocktails in the Master's study and then went for dinner in the dining hall. Under the balcony at the north end was the Fellows' table, which was used for this dinner and for the Wednesday luncheon. Each Fellow was given 150 meals a year free.

It was the policy in the College from the beginning that the Fellows would eat with the students and thus bring the two groups into intimate contact. At first it was awkward on both sides, but in time it worked itself out, and both groups found that they gained much from the relationship.

In some Colleges, there was a "high table" where the

Fellows ate together. In others there was an attempt to mix Fellows and students with varying degrees of success.

Every year in Timothy Dwight, just before the vacation, a Christmas dinner was held. The dining hall was decorated with a lighted tree, and on all the tables were poinsettias and candles which lighted the room. There was a traditional dinner, and toasts were drunk in mulled cider. Just before dinner was served, students came in from the kitchen bearing aloft on a decorated wooden platter a suckling pig with an apple in its mouth. The procession was headed by a man playing a trombone. They marched around the hall amid the cheers of the students. The pig was then carved by the chef and passed to those who wanted some. After dinner, a Santa Claus gave out presents, and the evening ended with the singing of carols.

For a good many years most of the College went on a warm spring Saturday for a picnic to Dr. Haggard's farm in Woodbridge. There were ball games between the students and Fellows. Steaks were cooked over an open grill - one year 400 - by the Fellows with student helpers.

For several years, starting in 1940, I gave a dinner in the College for the students and Fellows. There was sherry in the lounge, the tables were decorated with flowers and candles, and there were nuts and candy. The dinner was a fine one planned with the help of Miss Bowers and the College dieti-

cian. Here is a sample menu:

21 January 1942

Consomme Julienne  
Celery Radishes Olives  
Halibut Fillet, Hollandaise Sauce  
Shoe String Potatoes  
Celery Hearts  
Rolls  
Roast Turkey with Dressing  
Broiled Tomato Fresh Buttered Peas  
Fresh Strawberry Sundae  
Vino Branco: Maduro  
Cigars Cigarettes  
Coffee

At that time there was a rule that no wine could be served from the pantry or by any College employee, and so I had two butlers who served the wine from a small hall connected with the north end of the dining hall. After dinner there was entertainment in the lounge.

These dinners soon became a tradition - at Yale it takes only two or three years to establish an "old" tradition. With the coming of war, however, they had to be discontinued, and after the war, because the number of people in the College made it impossible for all to be accommodated in the dining hall at one time, there was no possibility of reviving the custom.

With the return of peace, things were different in the College dining halls. Meals had to be eaten in short order while the food remained warm on tin trays. The ice cream

melted and spread into the main course. Before one left the dining room, the tray had to be taken to the pantry and scraped - not a very appetizing procedure. The dining room and kitchen staff were greatly reduced.

The student-Fellow relationship changed drastically. No longer was it a pleasure to eat in the dining hall. The Fellows and students generally ignored each other, rushed through their not-too-attractive meal, and left. Fellows tended more and more to eat together, as there was a feeling that the veterans were not interested in conversation with them. The joys of former days were gone, never to be completely recaptured.

In 1954 the tin trays were abandoned, and the College china came back. We still have cafeteria service, but the hot food is put on hot plates. No longer is it necessary to carry the soiled dishes back to the pantry; they are left on the table and removed by Freshman bus boys and waitresses. It is luxurious compared to the conditions of the immediate post-war years.

The food today is good, and the student can go back for second helpings. At luncheon, for instance, there is soup, at least two choices for the main course with vegetables, several salads, many desserts including fruit, tea, coffee and as much milk as they want. On warm days there is iced tea and coffee. At the Senior Dinner in May, there is either

steak or roast beef, and usually wine. What a contrast to early eating at Yale!

When the Colleges opened, the students were required to pay for twenty-one meals a week. The fraternities, dependent upon their grills for much of their revenue, feared that they might have to go out of business. There were articles in the News and numerous conferences with University authorities. The fraternities felt that if their members had to pay for twenty-one meals in the Colleges, they could not afford to eat in the grills. Their problem was partially solved by a reduction of the required minimum to ten meals a week. The other eleven they could take where they wished. There was no desire on the part of the University to destroy the fraternities.

After the war the students were charged for fourteen meals per week in the Colleges, and in 1952 the twenty-one meal contract was re-instituted. This was a blow to the fraternities. As it was worked out, each delegation had one dinner a week, but the grills were open Tuesday through Saturday, and in many houses breakfast was served.

The presidents of the fraternities in 1965 reported the procedures which have been followed in serving meals:

Phi Gamma Delta - 1950-1964: each member was charged a basic fee of \$2.50 for one meal per week (Seniors, \$2.50 every other week); he was charged extra for additional

meals or for guests; only 15 to 20 members attended the dinners, and few took more than one meal per week. Since 1964: the basic cost (food and labor) plus a small profit margin is divided into 5 shares; Sophomores and Juniors pay 2 shares, Seniors pay 1; members may eat as many meals per week as are served (generally 2 or 3); guests are permitted at no additional charge; a minimum of 50 members now patronize each dinner.

Beta Theta Pi - New Plan instituted in 1964: delegation meals eliminated; dinner served three times per week; cost divided among all members approximates \$3.50 per man per week; quality and quantity of food superior to that served in the Colleges; 200 to 250 dinners served per week; informal, self-service breakfast served Tuesday through Saturday; cost divided among all members approximates \$3.50 per man per month; patronized by 75 to 100 per week.

Fence Club - 1929-1934: served 3 meals per day @ \$12.00 per man per week; averaged 60 for breakfast, 70 for lunch, 100 for dinner. 1934-1941: breakfast and dinner served Monday through Saturday; 10 meals for \$5.50; average of 40 for breakfast and 60 for dinner. In 1941, changed to à la carte breakfast (.90) and dinner (\$2.00) Tuesday through Saturday; averaged 15 for breakfast and 30 for dinner. Since 1951: delegation system - one breakfast and one dinner per week compulsory; \$14.40 per month per man;



250 meals served per week.

Zeta Psi - Supper served Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday; full breakfast on Saturday; light breakfast Tuesday through Friday; average of 250 suppers per week eaten by membership of 150. Total meal costs divided among class delegations: Sophomores, 40%; Juniors, 40%; Seniors, 20%. Normal monthly charge: Sophomores and Juniors, \$14 to \$18; Seniors, \$8 to \$12. Each member permitted to entertain (without extra charge) one faculty member per month or a date on any Friday night; for any other guest, he is charged \$2.50 for supper. Graduate students approved by the House may participate in meal plan at Senior rate.

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Thus ends the story of "Eating at Yale" from 1701 to the present time. During the years of the early Commons, as we have seen, the food was not good - at times it must have been frightful - and the students responded with organized rebellions. As the years went on, however, things changed, and present-day food at Yale is very good - much better, perhaps, than that which some of the students have at home!

