

It's Always History in Skinker-DeBaliviere

by Jo Ann Vatcha



The TIMES has often featured personal memories of the early days of the neighborhood. In early 2000, we announced the formation of a neighborhood archive, and the wonderful contributions of many neighbors resulted in our neighborhood centennial project, the publishing in 2008 of a book, CELEBRATING SKINKER-DEBALIVIERE, HISTORY AND COMEBACK. It is still very much available, at the Missouri History Museum shop or by direct purchase from the TIMES website.

Since then, we have received many more memories, and we've begun a more focused research project in cooperation with the Great

neighborhood.

Rivers Greenway organization, to highlight the unique history of the DeBaliviere Strip.

We've already made some amazing finds, and we can't wait to share them with our readers.

Recently, Anne Reis Voss, who grew up just north of Delmar and DeBaliviere and who still lives nearby on Windemere Place, sent us some great photos and memories of growing up on DeBaliviere.

There are many stories to come! And soon, we will be assembling other pieces of the history puzzle on our TIMES website. Send me your stories and photos at jvatcha@sdtimes.org or by dropping by at the SDCC office, 6008 Kingsbury.

Diversity Watch: Share your stories!

The Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood is so special in our efforts to build a diverse and dynamic community. There is nothing like hearing true stories that demonstrate how our compassion reaches across cultures, gender, religion, physical ability, age and economics...maybe even species!

Share your inspirational experiences with us so that we can in turn ignite a fire of encouragement and active cross-cultural engagement that will be a model for St. Louis! Many of these stories will be included in the TIMES and other mediums as examples of compassion across cultures. You may contact Cecilia Nadal at info@gitana-inc.org or 314-721-6556 with your questions or to discuss your experiences or ideas.

Cecilia lives in the neighborhood and is actively involved in community

engagement, education and the arts in St. Louis. She is the founder and Executive Director of Gitana Productions, a nonprofit arts and education company that promotes cross-cultural engagement through music, dance and drama. Recently Gitana's work with immigrant and local families was featured in the PBS Special HOMELAND: IMMIGRATION IN AMERICA. Gitana produces original plays, sponsors international concerts and runs a community arts program for immigrant and local youth in north and south St. Louis.

Cecilia's comments about writing this periodic feature for the TIMES, "What fun it will be to write about the active love and generosity of our neighbors in a community that strives to be authentically inclusive!"

MEMORIES OF THE BOULEVARD

by Anne Reis Voss

Some of my earliest memories of DeBaliviere were when we lived at 5650 Clemens [around 1930]. My father would give me a ride jumping off a large back porch. We would sleep on a blanket in the back yard. I arose early one morning and walked over the gangway past Glazier's Hardware to a jewelry store on Delmar, just west of DeBaliviere, to wait for the store to open. The owner would give me candy. I was 4 years old.

Later, my mother would send me to Moll's Bakery to bring home a loaf of fresh bakery bread. As I carried the bag home, my nose was over the bread. A heel was usually missing by the time I arrived home.

In the early forties, I rode my brother's bicycle over to Forest Park where I played tournament tennis. On the way home, there were two places to buy ice cream--Velvet Freeze on the east and Green Lea on the west side of DeBaliviere.

Later, I discovered the wonderful back room of Garavelli's at Pershing, with sawdust on the floor and a line where you could watch the server carve humongous slices of beef or ham for a sandwich. If I had a generous date, we would eat in the main dining room with a two-story atrium and outstanding walnut paneling.

On Sunday afternoon I went to the matinee at the Apollo Theatre on DeBaliviere or the Pageant on Delmar.

The Ice Skating Club at Blewett High School went to the Winter Garden [previous home of the Jai Alai sport during the 1904 World's Fair and Olympics and now home to Crossroads Academy]. Mr. Bockelbrink was our patient teacher sponsor. After skating, we descended on Parkmoor, on the west side of DeBaliviere at Pershing, to listen to the juke box and dance in the aisles. Some thought it cool to smoke and wave around a cigarette, often with uncool results.

We had an excellent art teacher, Mr. F. Arthur Krause, at Blewett HS [located on Enright near Hamilton]. One of my paintings of speed skaters at the Winter Garden hung at the City Art Museum.

On the west side of the street at Delmar, I often watched a Chinese lady stir fry our fresh dinner in a large wok.

With Mark Kay Burke or Patsy Daly, I would walk over DeBaliviere, sit in the free seats, and walk home late at night.

Often, when walking over to ice skate, I would stop in the Barrel Bar on Delmar to visit with my brother, Tom. It was across the street from Golden Fried Chicken Loaf, just west of Clara, where you could purchase a wonderful, fresh, whole fried chicken in a loaf of fresh bread.

DeBaliviere was the grand entrance to the 1904 World's Fair and is today the great entry to Forest Park.

TOD Planning

Continued from p. 6

Around the Forest Park Station there would be a transit plaza covering the tracks on either side of DeBaliviere. To the north new buildings fill in the empty/parking lots and replace the suburban-style buildings. Access from Pershing to the west is added, an obvious oversight. We want people to use this thing, right? Whether one is going to the station or Forest Park there is no reason one should have to go all the way around. The Metro parking lot would be replaced by an 8-story tower with structured parking.

The plan introduces a form-based code for the area. A form-based code regulates the physical form of buildings rather than

just their use. So for a new development at a given site the code would say what range of heights, what sort of setback, and what sorts of uses are permitted. It does not include minimum parking requirements, instead leaving it up to market forces. This regulatory scheme will foster the types of developments outlined in the plan.

With the Vision for Parkview Gardens, the Loop Area Retail Study, the Skinker DeBaliviere Development Plan, and the TOD Station Area Plan, the area is quite adequately planned and studied. The visions in these documents indicate the area has an aspirational and ambitious mindset. If it all comes to be we will have a world-class urban neighborhood.

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KO Koverly and The Mural Room

by Jo Ann Vatcha

Of all the larger-than-life characters who are part of the colorful history of what was known as the "DeBaliviere Strip," an entrepreneur named K O Koverly stands out. In the 50's, his restaurant was one of the great places to go for music and dining, to see and be seen.

KO Koverly was actually Godjo Kovacevitch, who had a wrestling

was the victim of theft of a three 1/2 carat \$ 4500 ring by "a girl from New Orleans" in a hotel in Louisville, saying "she must have given me a Mickey Finn." Even at his restaurant, the Mural Room, Koverly managed to get in trouble. In 1951, he was arrested for "selling intoxicating liquor on Sunday."

The Mural Room began

the basement...was only an old sewer, covered during recent remodeling...Koverly revealed that the club had been having difficulty with its electric lights for several months."

After the fire a bit of mystery issues: It appears that Koverly moved next door once again, this time to 419 DeBaliviere, where the restaurant became The Terrace Lounge. That name and address are listed in business and phone directories all the way to 1970, when it, too, was destroyed by fire. Perhaps some of our neighbors/readers will remember those days!

Marj and Brad Weir, who have lived in Skinker-DeBaliviere since 1961, remember the spot well: "When Brad and I were dating in 1959 and 1960, we dined and danced at the Terrace Lounge which was overseen by the host, K.O. Koverly. It all seemed very proper. Neither of us remembers it as the Mural Room, but that must have been its earlier incarnation. It was a dignified place where you went "dressed up." I suppose it's too late to worry about confessing that we were served "adult beverages" without benefit of identification. We hadn't made it to 21 at that point, needless to say."

Globe "society" columnist Jerry Berger remembered it on his blog as part of the DeBaliviere Strip Club Scene: "George K.O. Koverly's Mural Room, where the rotund former wrestler beckoned customers to his almost private club."

By 1970, so much had changed on DeBaliviere; the fire at 419 destroyed not only the Terrace Lounge, owned by then by Al Singer, but the original offices of the SDCC and many others. The gap that now is the parking lot next to Pulaski Bank once throbbed with life as part of the legendary DeBaliviere Strip.

NOTE: More memories and details about the DeBaliviere Strip are coming in our next issue: The Stardust, featuring Evelyn West and her \$ 50,000 Treasure Chest; the Apollo Art Theatre; Talayna's, Sorrento's; Little Las Vegas; the Orchid Lounge; the Holy Barbarian; and several more! Let us know if you remember any of these or other DeBaliviere nightspots as we document that memorable time in our neighborhood's history. Contact me at jvatcha@gmail.com or 726-6974.



From the collections of the St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri-St. Louis

Photo from the archives of the St. Louis Globe Democrat, 1956. Special thanks to Charles E. Brown, Assistant to the Director, St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri-St. Louis

career in the 30's. According to the Pro Wrestling Hall of Fame website, in a chapter called THE HEELS, by Greg Oliver and Steven Johnson, Koverly was "a colorful guy who used fisticuffs liberally...For many years, Koverly ran a popular St. Louis restaurant called The Mural Room, which out-of-town sports teams frequently habited. Even there, he could pack a punch. On one occasion, a man entered the Mural Room, brandished a gun in front of alarmed patrons...and threatened to shoot Koverly for an alleged dalliance with a woman. George, in his calm way, said, 'let's not create a disturbance here. Let's step outside.' So they stepped outside the door, and George knocked him cold with one punch and told him to be on his way. He was a legitimate tough guy."

Throughout the 40's and 50's and into the 60's, Koverly made the St. Louis newspapers repeatedly. In 1945, there was a verdict of "unavoidable accident...by a St. Charles County Coroner's jury in the death of Eddie Campbell, a professional wrestler who was killed when a car driven by George (Kayo) Koverly... struck a bridge abutment... Koverly had been scheduled to meet Champion Wild Bill Longson at Kiel Auditorium Friday." In 1950, he said he

its colorful life in 1950 at 401 DeBaliviere, now site of Pulaski Bank and originally home to the Dorr Zeller Catering Co. The night spot was advertised in the 1950 program for the St. Louis Auto Show being held nearby at the Winter Garden.

The Mural Room moved from 401 to 411 DeBaliviere in 1952, when the building became home to regional postal office (who presumably didn't want a bar beneath their accounting offices!). 411 DeBaliviere had been home to Piggly Wiggly Grocery Store through the 30's and the Whirley Corp. toy manufacturer in the 40's. Koverly's restaurant and lounge was successful, with an annual St. Pat's Open House party, where he had "a covey of horses tethered outside the door all day as an attention-getter." He moved to 415 DeBaliviere in 1953; that building had been home to an A&P grocery in the 30's. It was called a "plush cocktail lounge and restaurant" by the Globe Democrat Newspaper. Our picture is from a Globe feature on DeBaliviere Strip from 1956.

In 1957 The Mural Room had a devastating explosion and fire in which St. Louis Fireman Frank Rychlink died. The Globe quoted testimony that a "hole found in

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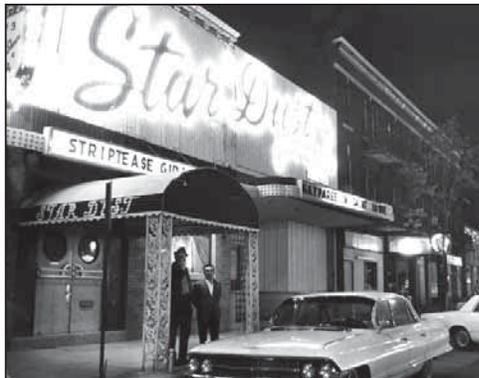
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The DeBaliviere Strip

by Jo Ann Vatcha

DeBaliviere in the 50's and 60's was known as the 'DeBaliviere Strip', partly because it was home to some strip clubs, notably the Stardust Club, whose sign advertised boldly 'Evelyn West and her \$ 50,000 Treasure Chest.' West advertised that she was actually insured by



The Stardust at 309 DeBaliviere (where the strip mall is now), in a photograph from the Globe Democrat archives, courtesy of the Mercantile Library at UMSL.

Lloyd's of London (according to pop culture expert Joe Edwards, her "treasure chest" was insured for lightning strikes, so she could get a \$10 annual premium!)

Evelyn West's Stardust Club gave the DeBaliviere Strip a kind of Las Vegas fame. Writing her obituary in March 13, 2005, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, John McGuire said "In St. Louis in the 50's and 60's, her name was as familiar to male adolescents and young adults as that of Stan Musial, though, of course, the two inspired different forms of adulation... In many respects, West was a kind of crossover artist. Burlesque... included music, dance, and comedy, with the stripping just one aspect." Among other entertainers who appeared with her on stage was Rodney Dangerfield, who went on to stand-up fame, with his memorable tag line, "I get no respect".

There were as many as five strip clubs on DeBaliviere, including Little Las Vegas at 317, but no one as famed as Evelyn West. Evelyn's husband Al Charles noted in a *Globe-Democrat* interview that, "in our block there were a couple of bookie places, gambling places, and Little Las Vegas... it was a live street. A beautiful street." But St. Louis Circuit Attorney George Peach (himself later disgraced for similar behavior) charged that the Stardust was being used as a "bawdy house" and Al Charles eventually pled guilty to "receiving the earnings of a prostitute" in 1977. Joe Edwards recalls going to the Stardust in that year, attending the auction of the contents and touring the somewhat seedy back rooms of the Stardust. But McGuire's obit mentions that retired deputy police chief James Hackett, "a St. Louis police legend,

admired West's moxie and her moves. He called her the 'Babe Ruth of stripteasing'."

There were many restaurants focused on fine dining and great music, including the Mural Room at 401 and Sorrento's at 341, on opposite corners of the west side of Waterman. The Mural Room hosted classical programs; Sorrento's jam sessions were legendary. The dining there was that of famed St. Louis restaurateur Al Baker, who bought Sorrento's in 1959 and moved to Clayton Road in 1966. The beautiful Garavelli's at 301 was a landmark restaurant, and a future article will cover the history of it, as well as the music venues.

Co-existing with the music and fine dining scene were the strip clubs, and there was lots of trouble and over a decade of pressure to "clean up the strip". As early as February of 1959, 'eleven persons, including two women dancers, were arrested ...by special police squads in a crackdown on night clubs in the 'DeBaliviere Strip' area and on two West End taverns.' At the Tic Toc, Miss Sylvia Albana, 'advertised as the Flame of New Orleans' was arrested suspected of performing an indecent dance.' At the Stardust, 'Consuelo Marchbank,



Poster courtesy of Bill Christman, artist and neighbor, photographed by King Schoenfeld. The poster is displayed in his "Joe's Cafe" on the 6000 block of Kingsbury.

who is advertised as 'Miss Chelo, tiny mite of the Argentine,' was suspected of performing indecent dances.' The raids were 'directed by Captain John Doherty and carried out by 15 officers of the intelligence and morality squads'.

Then in 1962 the owner of the Tic Toc, Edward G. Brown, was shot to death on the sidewalk outside the front door at 419 DeBaliviere by a notorious gangster who owned the Ace Cab Company, Joseph Costello. Costello had been implicated in the theft of half of the \$ 600,000 Greenlease kidnapping ransom a few years before, together with St. Louis policemen Louis Shoulders and Elmer Dolan, after the execution of the actual kidnapers Bonnie Heady and Carl Hall, who had

the streetcar shed and a firehouse. At the other end was the Jefferson Memorial with its trophies and firetrucks, and the bridge over the Wabash railroad tracks. In between were such enjoyable restaurants as the Toddle House, an archtypal diner... and the Parkmoor, home of the pedigreed hot dog."

The diversity of the strip was reflected in the hundreds of businesses which thrived there in this period, and we'll have much more in future issues. Our next installment will take us back to the 20's, as we imagine DeBaliviere's rich history. If you have memories or memorabilia, let us know: jvatcha@gmail.com.



K.O. Koverly's Mural Room had the prominent corner spot in the Dorr Zeller Building in the mid 50's. The famed bakery, ice cream shop, and caterer had closed in 1951, three years after the death of Oliver Dorr. In business since 1887, Dorr and Zeller moved to DeBaliviere in 1922, hiring prominent architect Preston J. Bradshaw to design their new bakery and banquet facility. They advertised 'weddings and parties on short notice,' and Edith Dorr's obituary later recalled her role in designing the interior, especially the ornate patterns in the ceiling ('hundreds of sundae dishes, each with three scoops of ice cream'). The building has been home to many businesses since that time, including the Central West End Savings and Loan and current occupant Pulaski Bank. Photo courtesy of Missouri History Museum, the Irv Shankman Collection.

been riding around the city drunk in an Ace Cab for days, with his bags full of money. By 1961, at the Tic Toc, Costello wanted exclusivity for his cabs at the "cabstand" in front of the Tic Toc. Brown shot back, and the wounded Costello was indicted and scheduled for trial in the killing. However, he died of a heart attack before going to trial.

Throughout the 60's, police raids on the strip were frequent, and the neighborhood pressure on city government played a role as well. Alderman Peter Simpson in 1963 asked for the cab stand to be shut down altogether, and in 1966 proposed renaming the street to Eliot Plaza to change the image!

Globe writer John Friedman wrote about the "Street of Broken Dreams" in 1969: The raunchy 50's were a time when DeBaliviere was paradoxically a daytime paradise for kids. At the north end were ice skating at the Winter Garden,

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To find your home on the Landmarks map, go to <http://Centennial.citywestend.org>.

Garavelli's Grand Tradition

by Jo Ann Vatcha

The corner of DeBaliviere and DeGiverville is (for now) a plain old strip mall, but for more than seventy years it held a magnificent German-style building that housed an Italian man's American Dream. Garavelli's was one of the jewels of the DeBaliviere Strip.

Joe Garavelli came to the US from Italy in 1901 at the tender age of 17 to join his brothers in NYC. His father was a government official in Bassignana in Northern Italy. "I got so homesick I couldn't stand it, so I told my brothers they had better send me back home. They did," he told Post-Dispatch writer Dickson Terry in 1964. "Before he boarded the ship, he stopped in Macy's and bought a new hat, a handsome felt of dark blue. 'When I got back to Italy, my friends all laughed at me,' he said. 'They wanted to know why had I come back? I told them I had just gone to America to buy myself a new hat.'"

He returned to the US in 1903 and became a citizen in 1909 while working at Cafferata's Cafe, just north of DeBaliviere on Delmar. He soon began to scout locations for his own restaurant and tavern. He found just the spot at the corner of DeBaliviere and DeGiverville, and the owner of the land was none other than the Anheuser-Busch family. The brewery actually built the original Garavelli's for his business in 1914 (see the traditional stork on its chimney nest?), and they promoted it relentlessly in their Bevo Tattler Magazine for the brewery trade.

Of course, this was during the time that the Anti-Saloon League was promoting prohibition, and it took Joe three long years to gain the support of the neighborhood to even sell beer. He recounted in later interviews how he survived by making sandwiches for the "motormen" who saw the place from the streetcars and started coming in.



Missouri History Museum



"Here they are - men, women and children - all Joe's friends."

and its marble fountain,... Garavelli's became an institution," said the Post-Dispatch. Many of these pictures are in bound collection by photographer C. Trefs, circa 1930, and preserved by the Missouri History Museum. They include the formal portrait of Garavelli himself we've shown here.



Missouri History Museum

During Prohibition, which lasted until 1933, and throughout the Great Depression, Garavelli's survived and thrived, with Joe greeting everyone with "Hello, my friend." During the worst years of the depression, "Joe never turned down a man because he was broke. Word



Garavelli's Restaurant, St. Louis. Built in 1926. Corubia and Henderson, St. Louis, Architects. A.B.M. Currubia, Designer.

Missouri History Museum

of this got around, and when the depression was at its worst there was a steady stream of the hard-up to Joe's back door, all of whom received a sort of box lunch Joe had devised to meet the situation. He handed out as many as 150 box lunches a day...the WPA workers in Forest Park and other places in the West End had reason to be grateful to Joe, too. Every day a WPA truck pulled up to the back door with orders for sandwiches and pie, orders Garavelli filled at reduced prices--10 cents for a big sandwich and 10cents for a man-sized slab of pie."

The restaurant was clearly a popular hangout for students at Washington University, seen in this ad in the WU yearbook in 1930. He even donated \$ 10,000 to buy a collection of rare books there. The donation stayed anonymous until WU asked permission to add new bookplates in 1944.



"Don't this scene make you want a juicy sandwich and a bottle of 'Bud'? On a raw November afternoon more than 1,000 girls flocked into Joe's place for such a treat."

Missouri History Museum

catering manager of the Chase Hotel, but Joe stayed on. In 1952, the business was again sold, this time to baseball great Stan Musial and his partner "Biggie" Garagnani, who said "we are aware that it is a St. Louis landmark, and we're going to do the right thing by it." Their



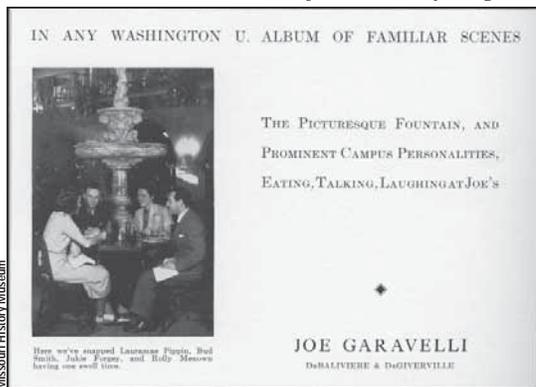
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The Garavelli fountain was sold and moved in 1955 to the Ladue home of businessman Sid Salomon, Jr., and donated to the City of St. Louis in 1973 by then-owner Morton Zalk. Southwest Bank helped sponsor the installation of the fountain at the Kingshighway-Vandeventer intersection. It now graces the entrance of the St. Louis Public Library Branch at that location. The magnificent chandelier sold at auction in 1974 for just over \$ 5,250.

plans never materialized, but instead Byron Tompras leased the property, and, for the next 18 years, he continued many of the Garavelli's traditions, including Joe himself, who lived nearby on Pershing and came to the restaurant nearly every day.

Joe Garavelli died in 1968; the area itself was in decline, with the Stardust and other dubious businesses accelerating the downhill slide. Tompras left in 1973 and shortly after, "the death knell for a St. Louis landmark was sounded"...when the contents were sold at public auction...the 84 foot bar was knocked down for \$ 70." For more than a decade, the building remained abandoned and suffered inexcusable decay. In the mid 1980's, a restoration project was announced, amid the deservedly heralded redevelopment of DeBaliviere Place by the Pantheon Corporation, but by July of 1987, they had sold the property to Mestman-Restnik Development, who applied for a demolition permit. Many neighbors



Missouri History Museum

protested as the Heritage and Urban Design Commission debated and finally approved demolition of the historic buildings. The May, 1987, issue of the TIMES gave the details, with heartbreaking photos by King Schoenfeld. But by July, all the Post-Dispatch could do was cover the demolition. Rita Cohen, who lived next door during the 20's, recalled the wonders of this great restaurant and how she sat and watched the grand "touring cars" that parked on DeBaliviere. The beautiful restaurant made DeBaliviere a famous destination.

In 1941, Joe Garavelli retired and sold his beloved business to August Sabadell, the

The Girl Who Owned DeBaliviere

By Marj Weir and Jo Ann Vatcha



Family of Rita Cohen

Rita Marie Weslik lived on DeBaliviere during the 20's. There will be more of her memories in a future issue about DeBaliviere's trains and streetcars.

In the 1920's the five blocks of DeBaliviere were a distinctly different place. Families were raised in the apartments above the store fronts that filled the street then. One small girl of eight was living at 311a, above Charles Young's grocery store. To Young's on the south was Ted's pool room, which was much later to morph into the Stardust Lounge. South of that was Garavelli's lovely and elegant restaurant and the Garavelli's Tap Room.

Our young friend's free time was spent leading her little "gang" of neighborhood friends. Returning home from St. Roch's School, she would rollerskate a circuit from home, around the block onto DeGiverville, up to Waterman, back east to DeBaliviere, in a triangle requiring no crossing



Missouri History Museum

This photo reveals the garden at Garavelli's at the rear. Perhaps the carefully spaced holes in the center are part of the birdhouse display Rita remembers.

of streets. On her way she would stop at Garavelli's, where Joe, who called her "Jimmy," would give her a treat from his side door entrance on DeGiverville, from the marble counter where he cut cheeses and meats for his famous sandwiches. She might go up the stairs to where the pie lady worked in the heat baking



Family of Rita Cohen

Rita with son Jim (Jacques) and daughter Renee L'Ecuyer.

pies. This was during Prohibition when Joe Garavelli transformed his bar into a soft drink attraction and focused on making his restaurant one of St. Louis' best.

Later she might skate to Petmueller's Waterman Pharmacy at the corner of Waterman and DeBaliviere, passing the Chinese laundry and Schoenfeld's shoe store (later the Apollo Theater), she might have looked across the street to see the a group of large sign boards. Next to it she remembers a "Putt Putt Golf Course", and later, the Parkmoor Restaurant. Further north, near the intersection with Waterman was a Shell station which had a soda machine where the kids would collect bottlecaps to get a free soda.

Her block of DeBaliviere was home to what we would call "Mom and Pop" businesses, like Louis Lopresto's shoe repair owned by a gentleman from Palermo, Italy. Velvet Freeze was near the Wabash RR where a "little man came out of a little house to lower the arm to pass."

The children would sit on the fence right by the tracks. Another Italian family, Tony and Helen Viviano had a clothing store in the old hotel at the corner of Pershing where one could see people lounging on the porch and watching the trains.

She became a favorite of a Greek couple named Kollias who ran a watermelon garden in the summer on the east side of DeBaliviere at Pershing.

Steve Kollias' restaurant was listed in many directories of that era, along with the fabulous Garavelli's restaurant directly across the street.

In the summer from her back porch she could see and hear the exotic birds that were presented in a huge cage at the rear of the main dining room of Garavelli's, virtually in her back yard. From the front stairs, she could see the "touring cars" that brought the rich from Lindell and beyond to have Garavelli's great food delivered to their cars, daydreaming about the day she would be in one of those grand cars. She remembers the incredible decor of Garavelli's with its brass doors she thought were gold.

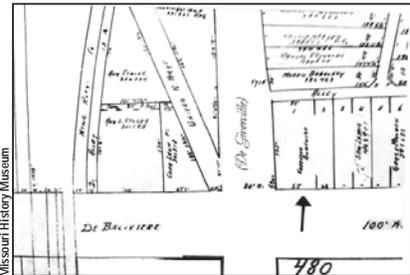
She and her Irish mother would walk over to the Jefferson Memorial and see Lindbergh's trophies and all the treasures. Once the girl and her club found a cardboard valise buried in the ground and filled it with garden snakes to scare her mother. But mother had the last laugh when she told the kids that "those snakes have families" so they had to be returned to their "home" in the park!

During her teen years, while living on Waterman, she recalled "cashiering" at Grace Piccone's Apollo Theatre and babysitting for the Piccone's daughter, Anita. This was years after she and her gang sat on the Piccone's "stoop" at 5710 Waterman to share the treats she had gathered in her roller-skating tour of DeBaliviere.

In the 30's she lived at 5748 Kingsbury, near the Jewish Temple on DeBaliviere. When she grew up, she married and moved to Clayton.

Her first two children were Jacques and Denise L'Ecuyer. For those who haven't been in the neighborhood for a long time, it should be mentioned that Jacques (Jim) L'Ecuyer was the first Executive Director of The Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council. He and his wife Glorianna raised their family on the 5700 block of DeGiverville, where Glori still lives. She arranged for our interview with her mother-in law, a much-appreciated privilege.

These years made her feel proprietary about the street, and she said she felt she "owned" DeBaliviere. Her name is Rita Marie Cohen now, and she is 93 years old. She remembers those years vividly and generously shared some time with us.



Who knew?

The 1905 Plat books for St. Louis show that Eberhard Anheuser, founder of the Anheuser-Busch dynasty, owned the property later occupied by Garavelli's bar and dining room. (see arrow) The plat found at the Mercantile Library, where this photo was taken, shows his first name as Eberhade, but another plat at the Missouri History Museum shows it clearly as Eberhard. Thanks to both Mercantile Library at UMSL and the Missouri History Museum--Marj Weir.

Upcoming History

Author's Note:

Our series about the history of DeBaliviere will continue in upcoming issues. We have been gratified by the response we've received from neighbors and former neighbors alike, leading to several personal interviews, such as the wonderful conversation detailed in this issue with Rita Marie Cohen. Those interviews are not only essential to our "getting it right", but also enlightening and enriching. There have also been reminders of what we haven't yet covered. One unsigned note to the TIMES mentioned more than just names of restaurants, but also the notation "whites-only". We are working on that research and plan to delve into that in upcoming articles. In addition, we have scheduled interviews that will explore the exciting but complicated music scene that made DeBaliviere an important part of our city's history. That's all still to come as we continue our exploration. We are also working on a new SD History Website, which will enable us to include many more photographs and data. If you have information to impart or would like to be interviewed or know someone who would, contact us at jvatcha@gmail.com or call 726-6974. Notes written to SDCC at 6008 Kingsbury will also reach us. Thanks for reading!

It's easy to view the above photos in a larger size when you view the TIMES online. And you can also let us know if you have comments or wish to be informed about the future history website. Go to "Contacts" on the home page: <http://sdtimes.org/index.html>.

News from the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council

SDCC Executive Director Liz Pund reports that SDCC has received and is currently reviewing a draft of H3 Studio's final Skinker DeBaliviere Urban Design & Development Plan report. The master planning process was started in 2012 to bring the neighborhood together around creating a shared vision for Skinker DeBaliviere's next 20-30 years. The process included 5 public meetings, a building survey, a walkability survey, and many steering committee meetings. The plan is expected to be complete by the end of 2014. Once the plan is adopted by the SDCC board, tentatively scheduled for the October 13 meeting, the process will begin to have the City of St. Louis adopt it as the official neighborhood plan.

Documents from the planning process can be viewed on SDCC's website, www.skinker-debaliviere.com, under "Planning Initiatives." Comments from neighbors are encouraged.

SDCC also reports that, as part of the SDCC's long-term planning, in May 2014, the SDCC established a Fund Development Committee to examine its long-term revenue sources and projected expenses. Fund Development Committee members include: Cheryl Adelstein (chair), Beth Bender, Gayle Evans, Marquisha Lawrence, and Mary Pat O'Gorman.

Liz reports that SDCC took this proactive step in order to identify funding gaps and prepare for proposed changes to how one of the long-time funding sources, the Community Development Block Grant, distributes funds to neighborhood-based projects. Instead of being allocated equally by ward, these funds are now being distributed through a city-wide proposal process that scores applications against specific activities that are eligible for funding that particular year. SDCC's work benefits the neighborhood in many ways including hosting community events, coordinating resident-led committees, and facilitating neighborhood planning initiatives - however, most of these activities are not expected to be eligible for CDBG funding in the future.

The committee presented its report to the SDCC Board of Directors at the August 11 board meeting. While the committee

believes that existing revenues could be enhanced, such as the Membership Dues, Friends Campaign, and existing special events, it also believes that these enhancements will not fill the funding gap that is anticipated after 2014. The report concluded with the recommendation that the SDCC consider the creation of a Special Taxing District that would benefit the neighborhood. The SDCC board voted to identify a group of people to work on the survey and petition for a special taxing district, and to seek input from neighbors prior to presenting a draft at the September board meeting. If the Board decides to move forward with the petition, additional public engagement efforts will be held over the coming months. The estimated 2015 SDCC budget: is \$130,000, with an estimated gap if we do not receive CDBG funding of \$50,000. A special taxing district issue would appear on the March or April, 2015, ballot. There will be public engagement before the vote to address questions such as: the proposed tax rate, the proposed use of the funds and other questions.

Other questions that the TIMES expects to be asked are: would a property tax be used to augment the SDCC budget or just replace CDBG funds? If there is a special tax, how would it affect other fundraising? Another question will undoubtedly be how does it affect Washington University-owned properties that do not pay property taxes. There will be more information in the next issue of the TIMES.

In August, SDCC applied for 2015 CDBG funding through the Community Development Administration (CDA) for three eligible activities under the "public services" category: food access, elderly, and crime prevention. CDA's funding recommendations are expected to be announced in mid-September. SDCC also reports that it will soon resume publishing minutes from its meetings on its website. Executive Director Liz Pund said, "In the meantime, feel free to call me or stop by to discuss council actions. Once we have information from CDA about the status of our 2015 application, we plan to include particulars in the TIMES."

Grant Green and The Holy Barbarian

by Jo Ann Vatcha

Among the pleasures of delving into our neighborhood's history have been the truly interesting stories of the clubs and music scene that was the "DeBaliviere Strip". The Mural Room, the Tick Toc Tavern, the Stardust Burlesque, and many more, made up the core of the Strip. Reading such wonderful books as St. Louis jazz expert and author Dennis Owsley's City of Gabriels make for appreciation of the individuals and music groups that contributed their genius to St. Louis' history.

One club stands out for its having been the site of a recording by jazz guitarist great Grant Green. His recently discovered and re-released record is called "The Holy Barbarian, St. Louis, 1959." As Owsley learned from Ollie Matheus, the club owner, "the Holy Barbarian was the first interracial club in the city and both of the (musicians) unions gave me a lot of crap over that. But it was the happiest place." Born in St. Louis in 1931, Green left to record with Blue Note Records in 1960, shortly after the short-lived club at 572 DeBaliviere was closed after only a few weeks on DeBaliviere.

night, part of their week-long stand at the Holy Barbarian, a beatnik hangout replete with chess players and a local artist painting portraits. The emcee chats loudly near the stage, then grabs the mic to spout what sounds like a send-up of beatnik poetry."

But, as Armand Lewis says in his Record Collector News website, "Nightclubs come and nightclubs go. Troubles with rents, liquor licenses, attracting enough patrons to cover the overhead and pay the performers and staff are all understandable reasons for high turnover. But when local police start harassing owners, that's a bridge too far. This was the fate of the Holy Barbarian nightclub in St. Louis in early 1960. The club opened in December of 1959 and was a real beatnik hangout.



The album cover for *The Holy Barbarian, St. Louis, 1959*, shows Grant Green with tenor saxophonist Bob Graf.

Abstract art on the walls, poetry readings and a racially integrated policy that got the attention of the (at the time) very segregated city. Local authorities would close the club down within four months, but not before a guitar legend just on the verge of breaking through would be recorded for the only time in his home town."

Because of its recent re-release, several commentators have taken notice. Kevin Whitehead, on NPR (January 11, 2013), said that "The Holy Barbarian, St. Louis, 1959 could be the name of a fine stage play, perhaps based on the actual circumstances of the recording. One musician on the way up, another past his moment in the limelight and one more who had his chance but never quite made it all convene on Christmas

The Holy Barbarian may have been the first interracial club in St. Louis, but its demise tells a bit of the sad St. Louis story. Fortunately for music history, Grant Green went on to New York and recorded multiple albums with Blue Note Records before dying young at just 43. Not so fortunate was the way the authorities shut down the innovation that was happening on DeBaliviere.

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Grace Piccione and the Apollo Theatre: A DeBaliviere Success

by Jo Ann Vatcha

"Piccione" is now a bakery shop at the corner of Skinker and Delmar, the creation of renowned St. Louis catering company, Butler's Pantry, owned by Richard Nix and family. The name comes from their grandmother, Grace Piccione, a name linked to the history of the illustrious Apollo Art Theater on the DeBaliviere Strip and later to the Delmar Loop through the Varsity Theatre (now Vintage Vinyl), operated for many years by Grace's son, Peter Piccione.

The Apollo Theater was located at 323-329 DeBaliviere Avenue. Built in the late 30's on the site of a 5-story building torn down for its construction, the 600 seat theater was for about 20 years a "family" movie house, possibly operated by the Wehrenberg family of theaters. In 1955, it became the Apollo Art Theatre, quite likely the first in St. Louis to show foreign films like Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's, "Wild Strawberries," and the Greek classic, "Never on Sunday", which ran at the Apollo for 36 weeks. This was a national "trend, a bright spot in the turbulent postwar era. Theatre owners were relieved to discover an avid group of serious film fans who blithely ignored the homogenizing inroads of television on public taste. Switching to an art house policy kept many theatres from closing their doors." (America Goes to the Movies, by Barbara Stones).

This was the heyday of the Apollo Art Theater, and Grace Piccione was definitely at the helm. Grace was born a Viviano, part of the Viviano family which, as Richard Nix says, "was the first to produce and distribute dry pasta and canned spaghetti sauce in the US." The family and their restaurant/bakery, Piccione, has commemorated, "Nonna" with pictures and a website history. The family remembers that she, "grew up watching the development of Delmar thriving in its early days as a diverse ethnic neighborhood. When Grace married the young immigrant Paul Piccione in the early 20's, it was University City and Delmar where they chose to raise their 4 children (Anita Nix, Nicolas Piccione, Jody Glenn, Peter Piccione) and stake their claim to the American dream. For more than a half century, Grace was a pioneer entrepreneur in the independent theater business. Her movie houses included the infamous Apollo on DeBaliviere and the world famous Varsity on Delmar. Grace and her youngest son Peter were incredible personalities and the Varsity was the bedrock in which the "late night Loop" was fueled. Who will ever forget Peter's idea to release the campy cult classic, "Rocky Horror Picture Show" to record numbers of late-night movie goers?"

The Apollo Art Theater was known nationally and was featured in a movie trade magazine, Box Office Vault, which in 1963 published an article about the theater and its innovative "Flicks and Pub" gathering place, which displayed local artists' creations, as well as Grace's own "mini-museum" of classic movie posters, art and antiques. As she stated in the article, "at first, people called it an expensive hobby. I loved



Anita Piccione Nix and her mother, Grace Viviano Piccione.

movies... there was a "real need for the European approach to movie going. When the customer comes out of the movie he knows he can find interesting discussions in progress right here about the film he has just seen." The article also highlighted the students from nearby universities who worked at the theater.

One former employee who remembers Grace Piccione was Rita Cohen. As a teenager, Rita worked as a ticket seller, and she also recalled babysitting for the Piccione family when they lived nearby at 5710 Waterman, an apartment building at the SW corner

of Waterman and DeBaliviere. (Read Rita's account of DeBaliviere, from the 20's to the 50's, in our August, 2014 TIMES.) The Picciones lived through the tumultuous war years, when Italian immigrants were treated with suspicion. But Grace took charge and made her mark in the movie theater industry. Grace recalled to the Post-Dispatch (In 1987, when nearby Garavelli's was being demolished) her efforts to keep the movie house going by showing foreign movies and art classics. For 15 years, Grace's Apollo Art Theatre was truly a destination.



Grace and Paul Piccione in the 20's. Family photos courtesy of Richard Nix, Jr., Paul Piccione and Peter Piccione.

Piccione sold the theater in the late 60's. The new owners gradually turned from the classic art films to the seamier side of film, and the theater finally closed down in 1970 after raids by police trying to clean up the Strip. The building was demolished in 1973.

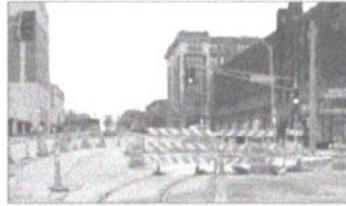
Out of Grace Piccione's creative and energetic hands, the Apollo went by the wayside. Her son carried on the tradition in the Loop with the Varsity Theater. And her grandson remembers his grandmother at the

Piccione, with its traditional Italian bakery treats.

Round the Corner to the End of the Track

By Derek Knight

Changes for the Loop Trolley have been continuous for the last year, and DeBaliviere is in the middle of a transformation. The junction of Delmar and DeBaliviere has seen some significant work, particularly on the water lines, and for the last few weeks the traffic lanes around the junction have been changing it seems almost daily. Rails were laid on the two streets and concrete poured, and then one morning on my drive I saw that the two sets of tracks were connected by a gentle curve, and it was suddenly possible to visualize the trolley taking the corner. The project recently publicly celebrated the milestone of the last long straight rail being laid, but for me, seeing this curve somehow made the process more real, and brought home the fact that soon there will really be a trolley taking this corner along with the cars and trucks.



Once on DeBaliviere, the trolley will travel to the terminal at the History Museum. The end of the line there has now become very apparent, with the tracks stopping at a pole which will carry the overhead power cables. Since the roadway has been reopened, it seems that it has always had this configuration, or perhaps it's just that the tracks look natural being there.

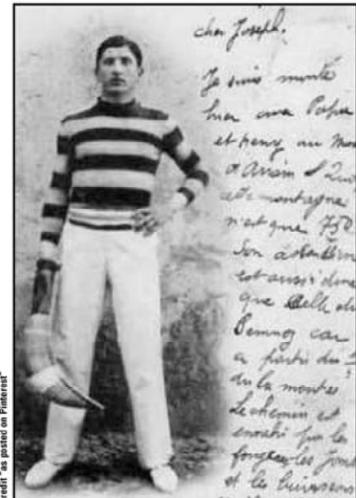
When I was in the area a few days ago, I took some pictures of the end of the line and started to walk around the curve towards Lindell. As I did so, I noticed something that struck me as odd. Everywhere I'd seen the tracks there were two metal rails, one each side, but here there was another rail, on the inside of the one nearest to the History Museum. About halfway around the curve, it stopped, and the standard 2 single tracks were seen again. Inquiring minds need to know, and I discovered that this is called a "restraining rail." This configuration is seen on curved areas of track only and is an extra safety feature to ensure that the trolley wheels stay "on track" (literally) as the train takes the bend.

The next excitement at this end of the line will be when the tracks around the History Museum are joined up with the ones already there in the southern part of DeBaliviere. This is now underway, which entails the closure of Lindell for 2 weeks while the work is undertaken. As spring fills the air, it won't be long before the clang of the trolley joins the birdsong in Forest Park!

Echoes of History: 500 DeBaliviere

By Jo Ann Vatcha

The present day Crossroads College Preparatory School is located on a historic site on DeBaliviere. At the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, the Spanish game of Jai Alai came to America for the first time. Fairgoers could recall years later looking down what is now called art hill and seeing the "odd shaped roof" of the Jai Alai building. The game didn't catch on in St. Louis, and, not long after the fair ended, the building was being used for roller skating and then to showcase the new cars being manufactured right next door. These car shows went on for many years and were resurrected in 1950 for a new Horseless Carriage Club.



Jai Alai player image on a 1902 program. In 1904, the game was first played in the USA at 500 DeBaliviere in a huge "fronton" site built for the World's Fair.

In 1916, the property transformed into a combination ice plant and ice skating rink, the Wintergarden, a hugely popular venue for those who had previously had to walk to the park for skating on the ponds. The old Jai Alai building was razed to build a "modern" supermarket called Bettendorf-Rapps in the 60's and was later used for the Welfare offices of the State of Missouri.



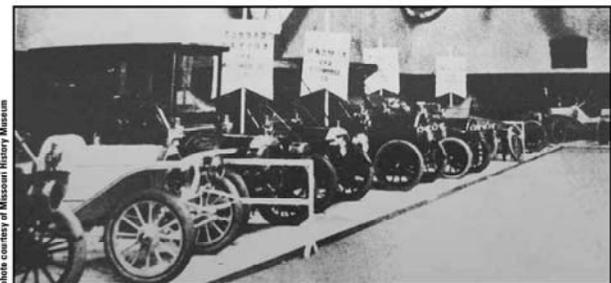
Transformation to the Winter Garden Ice Rink occurred in 1916. The 7 story building was both an ice factory and a rink for ice skating by entrepreneur M.E. Springer. This picture was featured in a trade magazine called Wire and Pipe. To read neighbor Anne Voss' memory of skating there in the 30's, go to our website, sdtimes.org/history.

The 60's building was renovated as Crossroads School in 1981; now called Crossroads College Prep, its recent improvements have made it the first school in the Midwest to receive the Leed Platinum Certification, and the rain garden and solar panels show its continued dedication to energy efficiency.

500 DeBaliviere echoes all the phases of development through the decades on this short street with a window on the history of Skinker DeBaliviere.

Note: A few clicks on our TIMES website brings you to all the "history" articles we've featured in recent issues. It's also a great way to see the photographs!

A few copies of the book, published by the TIMES following our 2008 neighborhood centennial, are still available. "Celebrating Skinker DeBaliviere--History and Comeback" also includes a copy of the DVD with interviews of several neighborhood residents and leaders which was produced in cooperation with Missouri History Museum. To order, go to sdtimes.org or contact Jo Ann Vatcha or Marj Weir.



The building was also used for various car shows, both before it was the Winter Garden and after the ice rink's demise. In 1907, St. Louis' first automobile show was held there.

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Researching Your Civil War Ancestors with Dennis Northcott

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The Parkmoor on DeBaliviere

By Jo Ann Vatcha

The Parkmoor Restaurant was located at 324 DeBaliviere (east side, roughly between Waterman and Pershing) from 1936 to 1969, the fourth Parkmoor restaurant in St. Louis. The owner, Texan William Louis McGinley, had invented and patented the "service tray" that car hops attached to car windows for the drive-in experience. His daughter

from MO History Museum



Lou Ellen wrote a history of the chain in 2004, noting that it was built in a former nightclub called the Car Lane with a party room upstairs that could be rented for \$ 10. "Many customers stopped in while going to or from the zoo, playing golf, tennis, enjoying the outdoor Muncy Opera, and the Winter Garden Ice Rink."

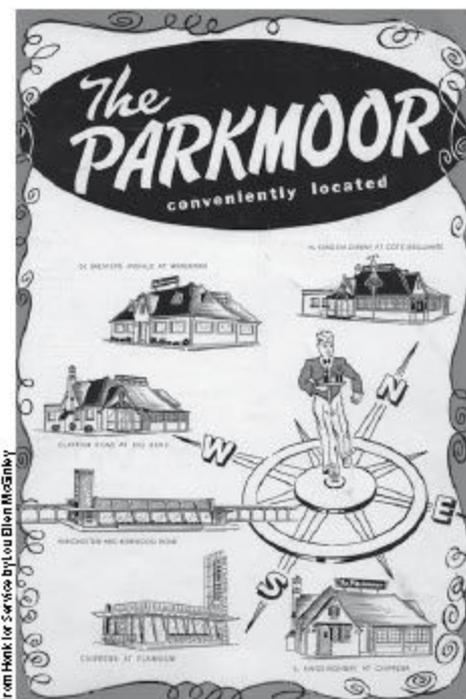
An intriguing website called [Restauranting through history.com](http://Restaurantingthroughhistory.com) featured the chain in 2012, with memories from employees and customers. Darrell DuBois recalled being a "car hop" and later a "soda jerk" who worked there in 1959. A sign said "Look for the Boys in Orange Jackets". Ann Lemmons Pollack remembered in St. Louis Magazine "the onion rings, perhaps some of the most remarkable ever to grace a St. Louis eatery. Huge and lightly cloaked in a preternaturally fluffy batter, they floated off the plate and into the mouths of those wise enough to devour them while they were shimmering-hot." And Jerry Berger wrote of "the Pedigree Sandwich at the Parkmoor, consisting of a hot dog, cheese and bacon." DuBois remembered the Hot Fudge Cake. Brad Weir remembers their burgers; the Vatches remember eating breakfast there on Sunday mornings and picking up the Sunday papers, which in the mid 60's did not deliver to our Nina Place address. Many, including Dennis Kiernan, remember "a picture on the wall ... a big cartoon done by the Globe-Democrat artist Vic Vac, showing huge numbers of people all hurrying from all over town to get to the Parkmoor. I wanted to be a cartoonist, too, and used to admire that picture very much." Vic Vaccarezza is now in the SL Media Hall of Fame, but that cartoon drawing has apparently been lost to history. "I started in 1945 at Debaliviere and worked all but south side. It was the best time of my life. I last worked at north side and I met such wonderful people, both customers and employees. And I just loved it," wrote Violet Lloyd Stegall.

The 50's were a time in St. Louis of many restaurant sit-ins, and Parkmoor was one of the "family-type restaurants" that former congressman, then Alderman William Clay remembered in

his work with CORE and the NAACP, leading to the landmark 1961 Public Accommodations ordinance passed by the SL Board of Aldermen, which effectively eliminated the widespread (if often unstated) policies of "whites-only". A well-documented history of that era recalls the brave actions of the members of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), who scheduled sit-ins in restaurants and department stores in St. Louis to slowly and non-violently bring about change (Victory Without Violence, by Mary Kimbrough and Margaret W. Dagen).

Most St. Louisans remember the Clayton/Big Bend location as the last of the Parkmoors. But, as former owner McGinley says, The DeBaliviere "Parkmoor Number 4 was life of the party for over 30 years before closing in 1969."

As we anticipate the opening of the "Loop Trolley" and the Great Rivers Greenway extension to Forest Park, we have been looking back at the history of DeBaliviere, that memorable short street from the MO History Museum north in Forest Park north to Delmar. Home over the past century to literally hundreds of businesses, DeBaliviere was also an entertainment area in the post WW2 era, usually referred to as the "DeBaliviere Strip". Find our ongoing series on DeBaliviere on our SDTIMES.ORG website, with articles about the Stardust Club, home of "Evelyn West and her \$ 50,000 Treasure Chest", the Apollo Art Theatre, KO Koverly and his Mural Club, the World's Fair Jai Alai fronton, later home to the Wintergarden Ice Rink, Garavell's glorious restaurant, and more. It is especially interesting to learn from some of our neighbors who have memories to share. Go to <http://www.sdtimes.org> or send a message to jvatcha@gmail.com.



from book for service by Lou Ellen McGinley





This was the grand A. Moll's Grocer Company in 1912. Above the great cars stands the clock with its Moll's 1858 title. Even with the angle parking, there was room for the trolley.

Moll's Grocery on DeBaliviere

By Jo Ann Vatcha and Anne Voss

Back in the day, folks did their food shopping every day, and there were literally dozens of alternatives throughout the neighborhood. Researching DeBaliviere's fifty plus years of businesses, it was a great surprise to find so many "food shops", "butchers", "bakeries", and more. But right at the intersection of DeBaliviere and Delmar, one place really stood out: Moll's, with its grand clock on the sidewalk, proudly stating its origin in 1858.

Adolph Moll had started his business way back in 1858, with a partner and a store was at 7th and Franklin in what we now call downtown. His great-grandson recalled in a publication called the Progressive Grocer that they served 17 states via steamboats taking labelled goods to outlying areas and bringing back various foodstuffs. The lavish store on Delmar at DeBaliviere was built after the World's Fair and lasted about 50 years, demolished as part of the West End Renewal Project in the early 60's, partly to make major repairs to the sewer lines going north. The resulting vacant land became the "Ruth C. Porter Mall" a city park dedicated to the area's local civil rights pioneers.

Anne Reis Voss grew up in the area and has participated in many community organizations, including the West End Community Conference and for the past twenty plus years with the Delmar Commercial Committee. Her memories of walking to DeBaliviere to the memorable ice skating

Wintergarden rink are recounted in the TIMES (see sdtimes.org and go to neighborhood history, then DeBaliviere stories).

Anne: I recall walking over to Moll's from Clemens for groceries and bakery bread—about 1940. It smelled so good I had to have a slice before I got home. There was a gangway just west of the store and its neighbor Glaze Hardware. The gangway was always flooded. I remember walking through water to St. Rose of Lima Grade School at Goodfellow and Etzel, 1932 to 1940.

My brother Andy walked over to Moll's in the late 30's early in the morning to butter the tops of the bread. Mother went to a beauty school west of the gangway from Moll's. East of the store were two "dime stores", Woolworths and Kresges, a furniture store and a Kroger grocery, a jewelry store and the Golden Fried Chicken Loaf. The Pageant Theatre was just west of Goodfellow. These were all on the north side of Delmar. On the south side were the Barrel Bar and the Top Hat Bar.

I started West End Renewal in 1964, which created a greenway directly north of DeBaliviere, demolishing Moll's and extending all the way to create Skinker north of Delmar. The beautiful clock was moved to LaCledes Landing.

Jo Ann: When you ride the trolley and go around the bend at DeBaliviere and Delmar, take a moment and imagine MOLL'S!

STL Village Third Anniversary Event on June 22

By David Foster

STL Village invites the public to join us for our "Third Anniversary Celebrations Happy Hour" on Thursday, June 22nd, 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm at the Highlands Club and Tennis Center at Forest Park, 5143 Clayton Ave., St. Louis MO 63113. The event is free but reservations are requested by contacting STL Village at 314-802-0274 or at stlvillage.org.

STL Village will also be looking off a new associate membership option for which this meeting throughout the St. Louis area which includes access to all monthly village activities and events. "We have a lot of demand from people living outside of our neighborhood footprint who want to be part of STL Village, so we are excited to offer this new membership option," said Madeline Franklin, STL Village executive director. "Our happy hours are one of the most popular events on our calendar, making this a perfect way to celebrate our anniversary. Everyone is welcome."

STL Village is a nonprofit organization providing adults a network of resources and engagement opportunities that promote an active lifestyle and the ability to age in place in the home and neighborhood we choose. To learn more, visit stlvillage.org.

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Some DeBalviere West History

By Jo Ann Valota

The completion of the new homes on the 5700 block of McPherson follows the redevelopment which started over 40 years ago in our neighborhood.

In 1978, the Post-Dispatch called it "Wiping Out the DMZ." In the early 80's, east of DeBalviere, what is now called "DeBalviere Place" was the largest Historic Tax Credit redevelopment in the entire nation. Leon Strauss, whose other St. Louis landmark achievement was the Fox Theatre, John Roach, 28th Ward Alderman, together with neighborhood leaders like Jack Wright and Calvin Stuart, Executive Director of the Skinker DeBalviere Community Council, worked many years to plan and eventually renovate historic multi-family buildings into nearly 2,000 condominiums and apartments. This massive project was a turning point, east and west.

On the west side of DeBalviere, 25 acres, including a former car lot and even a golf course, were leveled for new development. During this tumultuous period of the 70's, disagreement among current residents was strong and vocal. Disputes over the direction of redevelopment caused some rifts in the neighborhood organizations. It was a time of controversy and the surveying of the neighborhood to establish it as an historic district, as well. Should the remaining historic buildings stay or go? During this time, as Ken Cohen wrote in the TIMES in 1980, "Able Key and Hardware Store built, the Winter Garden Senior Building rehabbed...clearance of the old Chevrolet lot. Bi-State was ready to build its new garage."

Leon Strauss, who grew up in a U City apartment building himself, once said he did not remember anyone who lived in a house. "The only houses he knew when he was growing up were the white frame houses in the Andy Hardy movies at the Varsity Theater." (Patricia Rice, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 1976) Architect Eugene Mackey translated the Andy Hardy house into duplex townhouses on Kingsbury Avenue and Westminster Place west of DeBalviere to Hamilton School. A bandstand in the middle of the "square" reminds residents of this Strauss inspiration. Kingsbury Square was the result.

However, the 5700 block of McPherson was left out of the initial Kingsbury Square plan. Now, as Richard Boes's article reports, it has finally been completed. Developer/homebuilder Martin Jaffee has continued to build new homes in this area for over 30 years. (Those great new homes north of Delmar on Enright, etc. are also his work!). When Kingsbury Square was complete, he turned his attention to 5700 McPherson. This is indeed a milestone for the Skinker DeBalviere community!

DeBALVIERE... A WEST END RENAISSANCE IN THE OFFING?

Redevelopers envision bright new chapter in the colorful life of one-time grand boulevard that turned into a Runyonesque 'strip'

By Alan W. Akerson

"The test of civilization is the power of drawing the most benefit out of ideas."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is the early 1970s, and the scene is the hazy, hazy DeBalviere area in the city's West End. On the street are dilapidated rowhouses, an art theater, a credit grocery purveyor and various little shops.

Was neglected the street, become "the strip," kicking up her heels at a clutch of young boys and few houses. Few are the St. Louis cottage kids of those days who don't have cars in front of their houses, drive on "the strip" or its avenues.

And off DeBalviere, there are wide streets with grandiose neo-classical apartment houses looking down at them. More than one of the families living in them have a maid or butler.

It is a decade later, and the scene is the same but there are some bricks at the edges of the DeBalviere community's fabric. The "strip" has taken on a more orderly look, style cars, and there are police cars on the bars and strip joints.

In these more grand apartments, (Gardenia — and black and white — are beginning to replace the elderly and the well-to-do families that once lived there.

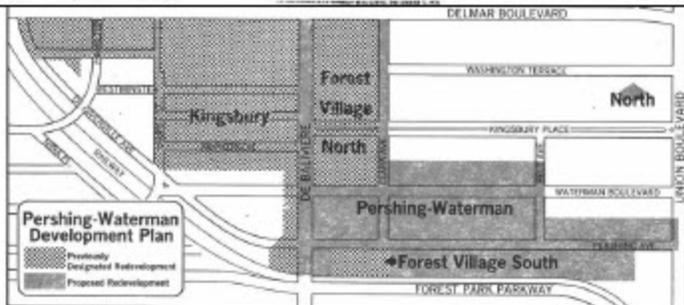
And now, finally, it is the 1990s. The street, the neighborhood around it, have had babies. The place is one of the most vibrant, well-kept up, best-kept areas of a city where such neighborhoods are all too common.

Yes, there are a few vacancies in the neighborhood, but of the 1990s, it is the most vibrant and best-kept area. It is a street that has grown from...



Above, Leon Strauss, left, president of Partheon Corp., and Carl Lehne, project manager for Partheon, look over the DeBalviere portion of their massive redevelopment area. At right, an aerial view shows a portion of the redevelopment area from DeBalviere to the west.

Pictures by Dick Weddle



Map by Frank Helms



A Synagogue on DeBaliviere

By Jo Ann Vatcha

Many of us have driven by the simple building with the “permastone” facade by the fire station on DeBaliviere and noticed its windows with the Star of David, briefly wondering about its history. A few years ago, Marj Weir and I spent many enjoyable hours at the MOHIS Research Center on Skinker, looking at old city directories and finding sources to fill out our knowledge of DeBaliviere Avenue. A spreadsheet of the hundreds of small businesses and several documents that became articles in the TIMES were the result. Some addresses never made it into full length articles, and one of those was the former synagogue at 537 DeBaliviere. To jumpstart the process, a recent Google search led to a trove of photographs on a local website called “STL Patina” from photographer Chris Naffsiger. A single comment caught my eye: “My father, Julius H. Funk, was President of the Sherei Thillium Synagogue in the 40’s and 50’s.” And I was off and running. I was quickly able to find and exchange emails and phone calls with Marilyn Funk Kaufman.



Memories from Marilyn Funk Kaufman

My father, Julius Harry Funk, was president of the synagogue and my Aunt, Mary Zeffren Funk was president of the synagogue's Sisterhood. We lived on Westminster across from Hamilton School, then moved to 5740 Kingsbury and our next move was 5787 McPherson Ave. Our extended family lived in this neighborhood and all the children went to Hamilton School, then Soldan High School and most attended Washington University. The memories of shopping on DeBaliviere, and going to the movies at the Apollo Theater bring a smile to my face. We walked to Forest Park, went to Jefferson Memorial, the Art Museum and sat in the “free” seats at the outdoor opera theatre.



Julius Harry Funk

In the pictures are the teachers and my Aunt Mary Funk who was president of the Sisterhood. The only others I can name are 4 cousins and my sister. My relatives all attended this Synagogue because we all lived in walking distance to the congregation. I remember after my Father was president a Mr. Maurice aka Morris Gordon was president. Also there was an elderly gentleman named Mr. Sarasohn who was responsible for keeping everything organized during the services. He was a scholarly man. My grandfather, David Zeffren attended services daily. Grandpa came to live with us when Grandma died and he moved to St. Louis from Rock Island, Illinois.

The congregation was Orthodox. Women and men sat separately which was required by the Synagogue. Most of the men came from eastern Europe and knew all the prayers in Hebrew as they were taught as children. When the synagogue was active there was a fish store operated by Mr & Mrs. Bloom on the ground

floor of the building. All refreshments were provided by the members' wives, no outside help. Everything had to be kosher. I remember the celebration of Purim at the "Shul". The children in costumes marched around the sanctuary and we all got candied apples.

The DeBaliviere Shul: A Brief History

537 DeBaliviere was erected in 1921. According to local historian Esley Hamilton, “ It was a typical storefront building, with a variety of businesses occupying the ground floor from time to time (Park Café, Dan Kittel printer, Samuel Sherman meats). Beginning about 1931, the Zion Hebrew School occupied the upstairs. By 1938 Sherei Thilim Congregation shared the upstairs space.” They purchased the building in 1944.

Sherei Thilim was an Orthodox Jewish Congregation which had moved from its original location at 13th and Carr, downtown. Walter Ehrlich’s book, Zion in the Valley, documents the history of the Jewish people in St. Louis, including an article from 1925 about the “Orthodox Community of St. Louis” stating that an original charter for “Chevrah Kadisha” had been in existence since 1862, and their charter was taken over by the Sherei Thillium in 1893. 45 years later, the congregation had arrived on DeBaliviere, where they stayed through the 40’s and 50’s.

Although there appear to be no written records of a merger, it is believed that the congregation merged with Mishkan Israel and moved to University City, in the early 60’s. The St. Louis Rabbinical College was listed as having been established at Sherei Thelim, and in 1965, Sherei Thelim was still listed as one of ten orthodox synagogues in St. Louis.

The building was sold in 1966 to Pattison Baptist Church, founded in 1897, moving from north of Shaw Ave when Highway 44 was built. This follows a pattern for many of the Jewish synagogues in St. Louis, moving westward first from the old downtown Ghetto, some merging and moving westward again and selling their buildings to black churches. As Ehrlich points out, “... what had been Jewish synagogues almost universally became AA churches. That happened in the Ghetto, and that pattern held true farther west in the central corridor.” It is not yet known if Pattison Baptist Church is still active. The windows with the Star of David have prompted this very brief glimpse into a part of our neighborhood’s history and the Orthodox Jewish congregation that thrived on DeBaliviere for some 30 years.

Thanks to STL Historian Esley Hamilton, Dennis Northcutt of the MOHIS library, and Diane Everman Archivist of St. Louis Jewish Community Archives/Holocaust Museum Archives.

For more history, see Walter Ehrlich’s book, Zion in the Valley. Visit our website, <http://www.sdtimes.org> and look for the special collections to see more memories from past interviews, as well as the Hamilton School photos and article from 2015. An expanded interview with Marilyn Funk Kaufman will soon be added to our TIMES website: <http://www.sdtimes.org>.

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Mike Faille - the Talayna

By Jo Ann Vatcha

The developments now underway on DeBaliviere have made me think of the 60's on the illustrious, often infamous "DeBaliviere Strip". We've previously written about the grand Garavelli's Restaurant and the Stardust Lounge on the west side, as well as the Parkmoor on the east side. We also had a wonderful interview with Rita L'Ecuyer Cohen, who lived among the excitement and roller skated around DeBaliviere, soaking it all in. Rita knew the Kollias family, Greek immigrants who had a "watermelon garden restaurant" in the 20's and 30's at the southeast corner of Pershing and DeBaliviere. There were other small restaurants at that site all the way to the 60's. That's when an industrious young man started his pizza empire there.



Photo from Faille Obituary



Photo from TIMES archives

That young man was Mike Faille of Talayna's. What a unique individual he was, and what memorable restaurants he created, most of them right here in our neighborhood. He told writer Jeanette Cooperman (St. Louis Magazine, November 2011) that he was born at 1028 Hamilton, worked at Sorrento's (corner of DeBaliviere and Waterman), and opened his own pizza place at 304 DeBaliviere in 1964. Then he moved across the street to 315 DeBaliviere (as Pepe's Pizza?) from 1965-1968. That was a tumultuous time on DeBaliviere, and in 1968, he moved to his most memorable location at Skinker and Forest Park Parkway. In the 70's, 304 DeBaliviere on the east side was replaced by a Burger Chef, then a Pasta House, followed by a great restaurant in the 80's called Redel's.



Photo from Lost Table.com

Talayna's was a St. Louis fixture for nearly 30 years at the Skinker corner. In 1997, when WU bought and redeveloped the Skinker property, Faille went back to his roots, buying his original 304 DeBaliviere location from the Redel's owners for a purported \$800,000. He stayed there for a few years, selling the property (but not the name!) in 2011.

The food: Here's how he described it: "Good pizza is crispy. Right amount of sauce and cheese, good sauce, good cheese, good spices. The dough is proofed, not too old, but not too fresh or it won't rise, it'll get doughy, dark on the outside and raw on the inside... Some people might use all provol cheese, which is not good, and they use a conveyor oven. I use a stone oven... No one goes through what I go through."

The decor on Skinker: After he expanded to the whole first floor, the decor was, shall we say, bold. Stained glass windows from a demolished church were everywhere, and Greek and Roman statues abounded. A take-out window was manned by a very efficient and friendly guy with one ear missing.

The personality: He was the jitterbug champion at the old Club Imperial. The gambling? Neighbors of a certain age will remember the huge house on Lindell he half-built and left unfinished for several years.

The name Talayna's? Said to be Yiddish for Italian, a nickname he got from older Jewish players at the old handball court in Forest Park. Talayna's was a vivid part of the Skinker-DeBaliviere Neighborhood for 47 years.

Note: Previous articles on the DeBaliviere Strip can be found in the TMES OF SKINKER DEBALIVIERE website, <http://www.sdtimes.org>. See the Special Articles section or use the "custom search" feature to find:

- Memories of the Boulevard, September-October 2013
- KO Koverly and the Mural Room, February-March, 2014
- The DeBaliviere Strip, April-May, 2014
- Girl Who Owned DeBaliviere, Summer, 2014
- Garavelli's, Summer, 2014
- Grant Green and the Holy Barbarian, Summer 2014
- Grace Piccione and the Apollo Theater, April-May, 2015
- Echoes of History--500 DeBaliviere, April-May, 2016
- Parkmoor, September-October, 2016
- Molls Grocery, Summer, 2017
- Some DeBaliviere West History, April-May, 2018



The Gerhard Sisters on DeBaliviere

By Jo Ann Vatcha

The west side of DeBaliviere between DeGiverville and Waterman is now a vast vacant lot, soon to be under construction for the Expo at Forest Park, apartments, commercial spaces and Metro Bus parking. For many years, before the unremarkable 80's strip mall, there were Garavelli's, the Stardust, Apollo Art Theatre, and Talayna's, all subjects of past TIMES profiles. More than 112 businesses were listed in City Directories between the World's Fair in 1904 and the late 60's in a long block of restaurants and shops between DeGiverville on the south and Waterman on the north.

Famed St. Louis restaurateur Al Baker was at Sorrento's Restaurant at the far north end of this block, before moving to Clayton Road. Upstairs were smaller businesses, including a modest, but important photo studio. In 1971, when I needed a passport photo for our long-planned trip to India, I put one year-old Chanaya in the stroller and walked down Waterman from Nina Place to meet Duane Coe, a tiny woman who took our photograph from under an old-fashioned camera with a black cloak. Years later, when working on our neighborhood history at the Missouri History Library, I took the opportunity to look up that photographer and found a 1930 Roosevelt High School yearbook listing for Duane Coe, who wrote, "It is greater to be small and shine than to be great and cast a shadow." My memory of the tiny photographer was correct! Her studio at 339 DeBaliviere was first listed in 1938, so she was there for more than 40 years.

But there was even more important news to find. During the previous 30 years, from 1903 to 1936, the studio was occupied by a trail-blazing pair of sisters, Emme and Mayme Gerhard, who took some of most iconic photographs at the 1904 Worlds Fair, including a series of photographs of native Americans who were "exhibits" at the fair. As described in the profile of the sisters



Photo by King Schoenfeld

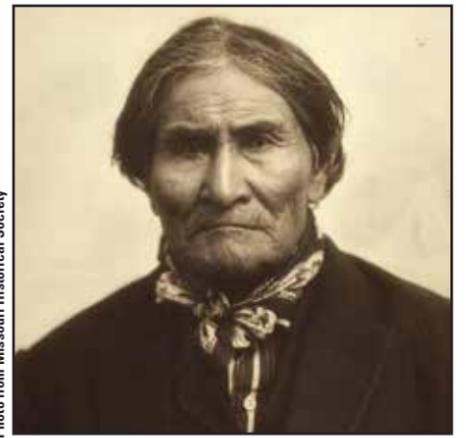


Photo from Missouri Historical Society

in the Library of Congress, "Some of the Gerhard's images from the Exposition seem to have been made in their studio, away from the 'controlled chaos' of the outdoor displays on the Fair's Midway. One of those is a portrait of Geronimo that contains an accidental 'portrait' of the photographer at work. It is reflected in Geronimo's eye and was discovered in 2009 when the Library's photo conservator realized someone was looking back at her as she worked. The 'portrait' shows a woman wearing a white shirtwaist blouse with a dark skirt, the uniform of 'the New Woman' of the 1890's and early 1900's. The phrase New Woman referred to feminists."

Later work included photographs of women in the suffrage movement, as well as weddings and other events, with both natural and artificial lighting. Both sisters were active in many professional organizations and gained enough economic independence to travel. They had at least two other studios in St. Louis. Both were married and continued to work together. In 1936, the Post Dispatch noted that Emme Gerhard was closing her studio on DeBaliviere to devote herself to painting at an art colony in Mexico.

When you visit the Missouri History Museum on Lindell and DeBaliviere, take time to visit the World's Fair Exhibit, where you will find some of the Gerhard sisters' photographs displayed. It's not often that one has the opportunity to



Photo from Missouri Historical Society

delve into neighborhood history and find feminist icons, as well as links to the worlds fair and indigenous people. For more details, explore the MOHIS website, and the Library of Congress under Women Photojournalists. They have more than 100 of the wonderful photographs taken by the Gerhard Sisters, many of them right here on DeBaliviere.

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The Goody Train Restaurant on DeBaliviere

By Jo Ann Vatcha

We've had such fun researching the illustrious past of DeBaliviere. Interviews with many neighborhood residents who grew up near and in the SD neighborhood have raised lots of questions and uncovered many memories about this amazing street of early to mid-20th century businesses. One spot we heard about several times was the Goody Train, and it was odd that we couldn't find pictures of such a fun enterprize. Now the mystery is solved with a marvelous website called "Lost Tables", dedicated to STL restaurants no longer with us.

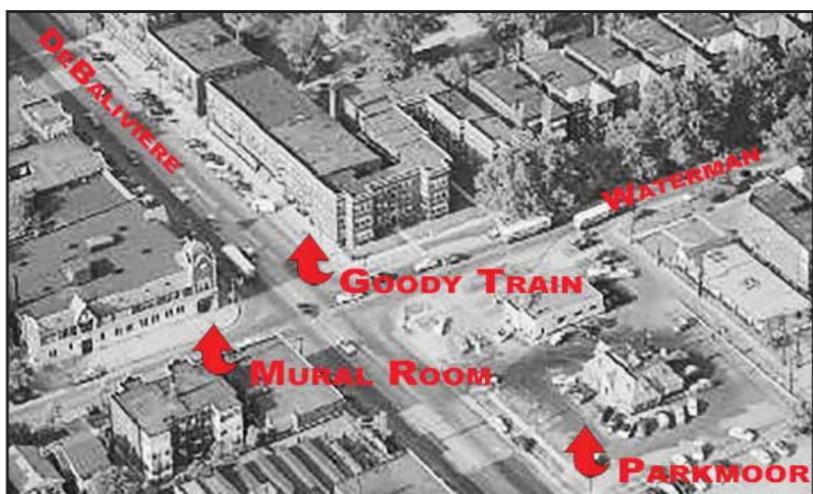
The restaurant with a great name, the Goody Train was a short-lived, but totally unique "concept" restaurant, created by entrepreneur Clarence Bick. Located in a former hardware store on the east side of DeBaliviere, near its intersection with Waterman, it opened in the fall of 1950.

As recounted in Lost Tables.com: The Goody Train advertised "fine food delivered by fast freight." The "fast freight" was a gleaming Lionel locomotive which made its rounds every three minutes over an oval train track, which disappeared through tunnels into the kitchen.

A fanciful story-book mural was created on the tunnel wall by two young Washington University artists. It featured blinking lights and tiny crossing gates, which went into action when the train whistle blew... The Lionel train included alternate Santa Fe and New York Central double diesel engines, a caboose, a gondola, a Sealtest milk car and "plate-cars" to carry the food... Customers sat on stools at the long oval counter and could signal the train with a button to bring menus. When orders were ready in the kitchen, the food was placed on the plate-cars. A whistle was blown and the counterboy started the train on its trip back to the dining area and stopped it in front of the proper customer to deliver their order... The train would bring the check at the end of the meal and customers could pay by train. The train-themed restaurant became a haven for young diners and was the site of many birthday parties. A freight-drawn cake and a juke-box rendition of "Happy Birthday" were added inducements.

Joe Edwards remembers going to the Goody Train with his parents when he was probably four or five years old. "It was a kids' delight!... DeBaliviere had so many cool places. Garavelli's, the Apollo, the Winter Garden, and so much more. Just remarkable for such a short street to have so much life." In a Globe Democrat article about the huge DeBaliviere Place redevelopment by Pantheon in the 80's, Dr. Albert Lindell, who owned an apartment building on Waterman also recalled the "little train" at the restaurant.

Check out other pictures from the Goody Train on the great website "Lost Tables.com" and see our TIMES website for articles about many other memorable DeBaliviere businesses. As Joe says, for such a short street, it had a truly amazing assortment of interesting businesses and demonstrated the ongoing power of the entrepreneur with a unique idea.



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