

Hazel's Carry Out

By Barbara Glakas

Back in the 1970s and 1980s there was a popular, small restaurant in downtown Herndon called Hazel's Carryout Restaurant. It was located in the little building with an A-frame roof on Spring Street, on the south side of Jimmy's Old Town Tavern, across the street from Herndon's fire house. The little restaurant operated there for about 15 years. The building was originally the carriage house for Reed's Funeral Home (now Adams-Green Funeral Home). In more recent years the building has served as a prep and storage building for Jimmy's Tavern.

The restaurant was named after Hazel Jenkins, the owner and cook. Hazel was born to Bernard and Lillie Cressel in 1930 in Rural Retreat, Virginia, located near the southwest corner of Virginia, not too far from the Tennessee border. She had ten siblings and spent many of her early years in the kitchen helping to prepare meals for her big farming family, with little time spent in school.

Hazel married young as a teenager and had three children. But that marriage only lasted ten years and she found herself needing to work to support her family. Although she had little education she knew how to cook and she worked in various places, including one job in Falls Church. In 1971 she married Robert Jenkins and they lived in the vicinity of Front Royal. In the early 1970s she was able to open her own place in Herndon and commuted each day to work.

Hazel's Carryout Restaurant was one room that seated about 32 customers. It included a marbled Formica counter and wall booths, with a juke box and live plants atop a cigarette machine. A black six-burner gas stove and Vulcan grill were located by the back wall. The outside of the building was painted mint green and there were five parking spaces in front of the restaurant. Big windows fronted Spring Street. Homey decorations included a wall tapestry which displayed two pheasants against a forest backdrop and a stuffed bass mounted on driftwood hung on a wall. One could buy a Have-a-Hank handkerchief there for 75 cents.

Hazel's was open from 4:00 AM to 3:00 PM, serving breakfast and lunch, Monday through Saturday. One 1981 *Herndon Observer* newspaper article estimated that she served about 200 meals a day and "half again as many takeout meals." Her clientele included a mix of town regulars, businessmen, truck drivers, laborers and families. She decided to open at 4:00 AM because "Herndon and Reston were booming at the time, and crews arrived before dawn."

Hazel was the cook while her daughters were the waitresses. A third employee was a dishwasher. Hazel's breakfast standards included things such as creamed chipped beef on toast, country ham, sausage, scrapple, eggs, oatmeal and country fried potatoes. Lunches included meals such as meatloaf, potatoes with gravy and peas, and chicken or tuna salad sandwiches. If customers wanted something that wasn't on the menu, she would cook it up for them if she had the ingredients. The secret to Hazel's success was "good food at reasonable prices."

By 1986, after working 15 hours per day, with a bad back, and increasing difficulty finding good help, Hazel finally decided to close. She hung a sign in the window next to her loud, often-

banging screen door, announcing the closing. Locals were saddened by the development. Upon the news, many people ran down to the restaurant to get their last meal.

Billy Martin of Peacock Motors said, “When Hazel’s gone, there won’t be any good place in Herndon, is the way I feel.”

Cobbler Don Ankeny, who worked at a shoe place in the adjacent alley and ate lunch there for years said, “I don’t know what I am going to do now.”

McLean Bank President, Thom Hanes, said that the closing of Hazel’s is like the closing of the post office, “Where will people go to meet each other now?”

Other’s agreed that Hazel’s was a place where you could get two vegetables and a potato with your meal at an affordable price, and that the closing will really hurt the people who go to work early.

After closing, Hazel said she wanted to rest for several weeks and then look for a part-time job. At one point she considered working in a school cafeteria, but it is not known if she continued to work.

In her later years, Hazel lived in Front Royal, Virginia. She bowled, gardened and enjoyed watching WWF Wrestling. She also became involved in many activities at her church, the Shenandoah Farms Baptist Church. Hazel passed away in 2021 at the age of 90, living to have 11 great-great grandchildren.

A 1986 *Times* newspaper said that Hazel’s Carryout was one of those neighborhood restaurants, “where people ate, not dined, and talking to a stranger was not taboo.” Another *Observer* article said: “Hazel’s was the greatest social leveler in town, the only place, in fact, where anyone entering, whether with blue, white or no collar, was immediately a member of a noisy, happy, hub-bubby clubhouse.”

About this column: “Remembering Herndon’s History” is a regular Herndon Patch feature offering stories and anecdotes about Herndon’s past. The articles are written by members of the Herndon Historical Society. Barbara Glakas is a member. A complete list of “Remembering Herndon’s History” columns is available on the Historical Society website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org.

The Herndon Historical Society operates a small museum that focuses on local history. It is housed in the Herndon Depot in downtown Herndon on Lynn Street and is open every Sunday from noon until 3:00. Visit the Society’s website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org, and the Historical Society’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonHistory> for more information.

Note: The Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday. If you have an interest in local history and would like to help, contact HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com.