

The Glass Kitchen

Corner of Walnut and South Streets - Vicksburg, Mississippi

The Glass Kitchen, whose motto was: “Cooked in Sight, It Must Be Right,” was one of several Vicksburg restaurants owned by the Nossler family. Others included Johnny’s Drive In, The Beechwood, and Rowdy’s. One of the trademark dishes of all of them are the Batter Fries and “Johnny’s Sauce” in which to dip them. I also miss the homemade rolls and soups. Umm.

Located downtown, the Glass Kitchen was a popular spot for breakfast, lunch and dinner. As a single guy, I was a frequent customer in the 1970’s and 1980’s.

Years ago a neon enhanced three dimensional waitress, dressed in a white apron and hat was perched above the door on the corner. She could be seen from both South and Walnut actually waving to all and welcoming them to the Glass Kitchen. No one seems to know what became of the sign.

The accompanying color photo shows regular customer, Bernice Masters, being served by Chester Rose, a longtime staff member.



Today...

The building still stands, but all identifying features have been removed. It is used for storage for Bancorp South Main Bank

In the background of the black and white photo and the serigraph one can spot the Joy Theater, which was the dream palace for my generation. I saw every thing from Disney’s “Babes in Toyland” (with Annette Funicello) to “2001: A Space Odyssey” at the Joy. The building has been replaced by an access road to the Bancorp South parking lot.

Even further in the background is the Bus Station: a major gateway into Vicksburg for years.

Isaac King

“The Hot Tamale Man”

Corner of Clay Street & Mission 66

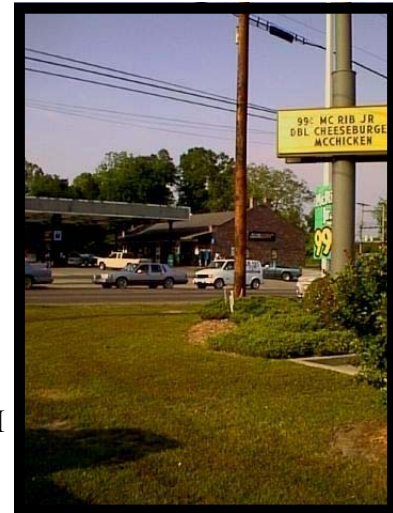
Isaac King was a hard working man. Rolling and cooking Hot Tamales is a big job. Pushing that heavy cart up the hilly streets of Vicksburg was not easy. Standing on the corner of Clay and Hossely Streets in the parking lot of the Rose Oil Service Station for hours in whatever weather had to be tedious and sometimes downright uncomfortable. But he was there until he sold out every night. I liked his tamales -they were spicier than some.

He was suggested as a subject to me, and it seemed like a good idea. I am shy about photographing people, so my first efforts involved sneaking around him, trying to catch him candidly. I soon realized that would never work, so I finally approached him and asked permission to take his picture. “Sure,” he said, “it might help my business.” Maybe it did.

Isaac later repainted his cart to describe his tamales as: “Mile and Good.” I don’t think he made his recipe milder, I just think he felt like some people were afraid of spicy food. He was probably right.

Across the street, the abandoned Koestler’s Bakery building is visible in the photo and the serigraph. That spot is now occupied by a convenience store/gas station.

Years after Isaac passed, a food writer (John T Edge) stopped in the Attic Gallery, and told us he was doing some research on how and why an ostensibly Mexican food like tamales ended up in the Mississippi Delta. I told him one of the late Mr. King’s grandsons had been in awhile back and introduced himself to me. I told John T, if the grandson ever came back, I would put the two of them in touch. He gave me his card which I stuck in my pocket. That afternoon when I drove home from work, I walked back down the driveway to pick up the newspaper. Our new next door neighbor was waiting there to introduce himself to me. He told me his name was Raymond King, and he had heard that I had done a picture of his dad, Isaac. Dumbfounded, I just reached in my pocket and handed him the card.



Today...

Isaac’s corner at Clay and Mission 66 is now home to McDonald’s. Koestler’s Bakery has been replaced by a



Today...

A parking lot for Bowmar Avenue Baptist Church occupies the former space of **Lagrone's Gulf Station.**

Garvis Lagrone's Gulf station at the corner of Bowmar Avenue and Washington Streets was as much a social club for a select few as it was a service station.

Wing's Grocery and Market (corner of Pearl and Speed Streets) was one of a dying breed: the "Chinese Grocery." Chinese immigrants opened small neighborhood grocery stores all across the Mississippi Delta. Vicksburg had about a dozen when I was young. Down the hill from Wing's, three stairstepped shotgun houses are visible.

The fountain is still on the corner of Monroe and Crawford Streets. Nice view of the Old Courthouse in the background.

Okay, the Mayflower isn't in Vicksburg. But it's a great old fashioned downtown restaurant in Jackson on Capitol Street. Greek salads, broiled seafood, and classic waitresses. The one bringing me my Coca-Cola was famous and much loved in Jackson. The Mayflower is under "new management," but they have maintained the menu and much of the ambience. The lights are a little dimmer and the lunch counter is gone, but the broiled shrimp and oysters are still good.

The house in the black and white photo was located on Pearl Street. The distinctive pierced columns are reported to be found only in Vicksburg. Examples are all over town on houses grand and not so grand.

The Solly family has been selling their homemade Hot Tamales in Vicksburg for generations. Although the business has been located on Washington Street for over 25 years, I can remember when they were on South Street, and later Cherry Street. Cover the table with newspapers first.

Veteran's cabs were a familiar sight for years. There is a beauty salon in the building now (between Clay and Grove behind Haden's Hardware.)

Goldie's Bar-B-Q

South Washington Street

Goldies was a major hangout for us. Presided over by "Goldie" Marshall, it was the place to get barbecue in Vicksburg.

The building was a type of prefabricated diner that was added onto over the years to include a glass walled dining room overlooking the river. At one time visitors were confronted by a talking mynah bird as soon as they came in the front door. As often happens, the bird was not always polite. But the most memorable character-in-residence was Flo, the waitress. She was an imposing woman with hennaed hair. She would come to your table and you would find yourself suddenly in the middle of some conversation that you were never sure how it had started. My favorite story about Flo concerned her Solomon-like wisdom. She served two plates of ribs to customers at the same table. One of them protested that his friend had gotten more ribs on his plate. Flo quickly removed one from plate A and plopped it down on plate B making them even. "There you go," she declared, proud of her work.



Today...

Visitors to Ameristar Casino can park where Goldie's used to be.

The business was eventually sold to younger family members who maintain it in a new location. When it was time to move from the original building, many assumed it was torn down, but actually it was loaded on a truck and moved across town and converted to a home. I went to look for it the other day, but couldn't find it.

Goldies has been my most popular subject in this series by far. The first serigraph I did of Goldies in 1979 was an edition of only 20. It quickly sold out, convincing me to try again. I started with another negative from the same night and printed about 50 of them - sold out again. There have been two more Goldie's prints, each from a separate negative, totaling more than 200.

About the Prints

Almost all the images in this collection are from black and white 35mm negatives taken between 1979 and 1990. Three different types of prints from those negatives are represented in this collection: photo-serigraphs, black and white photos, and digital photo-transfers. (The single exception is the color photo of Chester Rose and Ms. Masters in the Glass Kitchen.)

Photo-serigraphs

The photo-serigraphs are a type of silkscreened print. Making these prints is an involved process of many steps. It starts in the darkroom. After developing the 35mm film, the negatives are placed in an enlarger as if to make a traditional photo print. Instead of photo paper, high contrast film is used. This film makes a transparency which is all black and clear - no gray tones. The amount of exposure determines how much of the film will be black. For the purpose of making my serigraphs, I have to make several of these transparencies - one for each color in the finished print.

Silkscreening is a type of stenciling process. The silkscreen frame is designed to support complex stencils. It is a wooden frame with a thin silk-like fabric stretched tightly across it. To apply the stencils for my serigraphs involves another photographic process. The silk is coated with a water soluble photo-sensitive emulsion which is allowed to dry. One of the transparencies is placed onto the silk and covered with a piece of clear glass to hold it in place. A bright light is shined through the glass and transparency for several minutes. The clear areas of the transparency allow the bright light to harden the emulsion - the areas covered by the black remain water soluble. The frame is then washed with running water and the water "cuts" the stencil. One of these frames is made for each color.

To make a print, a piece of paper is placed on a hard surface. The silkscreen is lowered over it. Thick ink is spooned into the frame and pulled across the stencil with a rubber bladed squeegee. The ink goes through the unclogged areas of the silk and makes an image on the paper. Printing the succeeding colors of each print requires very accurate alignment of each screen over the already printed colors.

Photos

There are six black and white glossy prints which I have included for comparison with the serigraphs. Many details from the original negatives were obscured in the serigraphs. In many cases this was by design, and sometimes it was by the nature of the process.

Transfers

The last two images in the collection: Solly's and Veteran's plus the waitress at the Mayflower were made on the computer. My original black and negatives were scanned and manipulated to approximate the look of the serigraphs. The images were printed in reverse onto a vinyl transfer material and then transferred by heat to rag paper. No darkroom work.