



BELLINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION, PUBLISHER

# CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS



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## MASS. MEMORIES ROAD SHOW PHOTOGRAPHS ONLINE!



The Mass. Memories Road Show is a statewide, event-based participatory archiving program that documents people, places, and events in Massachusetts history through family photographs and stories. Archivists and public historians in University Archives and Special Collections in the Joseph P. Healey Library at UMass Boston collaborate with local planning teams and volunteers to organize free public events where individuals bring photographs to be copied and included in a digital archive.

On November 5, 2022, 49 history lovers came to the Bellingham Public Library with 169 photos of Bellingham people, locales and events to tell their story of the photos and have them digitized for this online archive, located at <https://tinyurl.com/2b39ycpf>

This program was made possible by a cadre of volunteers including volunteers from the Historical Commission.

This collection of Bellingham photos joins a state-wide archive of photos from nearly 60 cities and towns throughout Massachusetts. Check out the Bellingham ones, but also check out others that may be of interest to you (where you were born, where other family members live or have lived). The archive includes over 12,000 photos from the towns of Allston to Winchester and topics from the Boston Harbor Islands to World War II and is accessible at <https://tinyurl.com/39n5pa9t>

## THE END OF AN ERA PETE'S BLUEBIRD RESTAURANT CLOSES



*Bill and Stanny Coniaris,  
owners of Pete's Bluebird, with Katie*

*This article was originally written for the "I Remember Bellingham" monthly column that was published in the Bellingham Bulletin. It has been updated with information about the closing of the business.*

Bill and Stanny Coniaris, owners of Pete's Bluebird Restaurant, grew up next door to what was then their parents' restaurant, in the family since 1940. Their restaurant's family photos and other mementos say that Pete's is much more than their business—it's their home.

## PETE'S BLUEBIRD (CONTINUED)

**Bill:** My father came here from Greece after his mother died. He was the "Pete" that the restaurant is named for. Our Uncle Charlie owned *Quality Lunch* in Milford, which is where our father learned the restaurant business. Our Aunt Betty lived with us, worked at Pete's and took care of us when our parents were working. My first job as a kid was peeling potatoes. My father gave me a bag of potatoes and a bucket of water and said, "Peel some potatoes. We're going to make French fries." I kept peeling until he said "That's enough for now."

Rt. 140 was how people got to the Cape from the Worcester area before they put in Rt. 495 in the 60s. There were a bunch of other restaurants in Bellingham when we were kids: Ma's Snack Bar in the center of town, Ma Glockner's, Mrs. Hebert's, and the Paddock, where the 50's Lounge (was on Route 140 near Williams Way) Debbie's Steakhouse was right across the street from our restaurant. The south end of town had the Lenox, the Beverly Club, and the Bellingham Amusement Club, now the Coachman's Lodge. The Chowder Bowl was at Lake Hiawatha. In the summer Bellingham was busy, but in the winter this was a sleepy little town.

When our parents bought Pete's, they only had a seasonal liquor license, so they closed in the winter. We had four cabins that we rented in the summer during the 1940s. Uncle Nick, the ice cream guy, lived in one of them. He went around town in his little jeep selling ice cream. The cabins were in a depression between our house and Pete's. Developers in town dumped clean fill in the depression so we could make a big parking lot. We took the cabins down and donated one to the Boy Scout Camp, which was where Coparts Auto Salvage on Route 140 in Mendon is now.

One day I sat in the restaurant doing my homework at a table near the cash register—I was probably in fifth grade. Our dog sat next to me and I heard him growl. A guy reached into the cash register and took the money out. I didn't say anything but when he left I looked out the window and wrote the plate down. Chief Euclid Fleurette came down and they caught him.

**Stammy:** Police Chief Norman McLinden, Fire Chief Pete Kornicki and Fire Chief Vincent Thayer were all town authorities, but were more friends than regulars—they weren't drinking or partying. Police Chief Fleurette and Clarence Varney went hunting with our father.

Except for the summer, there were probably ten cars that went by during the day. We painted a crosswalk on Rt. 140

as a joke, for us to go back and forth to our neighbors.

**Bill:** We took cardboard, cut out shoe prints and spray-painted them in the cross walk. It was a fun thing to do.

When I took a first-aid course I learned that our fire department did not have a boat. My father was friends with Jesse White in Mendon and they gave us a deal on a row boat. We donated it to the fire department.

Over the years we've sponsored numerous sports teams in town and now we host car shows as fund-raisers. We split the proceeds between Tufts Animal Hospital, and Joe Deslauriers, who was gravely injured in Afghanistan. We've always tried to give back to the community.

People come in looking to see if their initials are still on the tables they sat at when they were kids. It's why we try not to do anything different here. It's a townie place, with trophies on the wall, pictures of our parents, and us when we were kids. One of our customers, Lindsey Schmitt, wrote a college essay about Pete's. She said, "At Pete's, you know what you want, what you're going to get, and you don't need a menu. Everyone should have a memorable place like Pete's, where everybody knows your name." I was so proud of Linds - she got a good mark on the essay too!

### Update—12-28-2022

As Pete's Bluebird restaurant hits its eighty-second anniversary of operation, the property and the business itself is being sold. The building will not be restored, so the Bellingham Historical Commission has done its best to document with photos and additional information about the town landmark and what it meant to the town of Bellingham.



*Billy at the grill at Pete's Bluebird*

## PETE'S BLUEBIRD (CONTINUED)

According to Bill Coniaris, whose father bought the restaurant from John Samarkin, the restaurant had been called the Bluebird Café. The Coniaris family retained the Bluebird and made it "Pete's Bluebird".

Bill noted that the Samarkin family used only the front bar area and side room as the café and lived in the back section of what later became part of Pete's Bluebird.

The pandemic of 2020 and into 2022 was the beginning of the end for Pete's. The restaurant closed from March to June of 2020, but the damage to the business was substantial. At the same time the price of meat skyrocketed. Pete's main menu was steaks and hamburgers. Charging prices to cover the cost of beef was not what Bill could continue to support. Bill tried offering take-out for a time, but found it just did not suit their business model. In August 2022 Pete's Bluebird closed for good. It is anticipated that the sale of the property will go through in the coming months.

A tradition at Pete's was for customers to carve their initials into the wooden tables in the dining area. How did Bill feel about that? "I thought it was fun," he said. "People would

come in years later to see if they could find their initials. They often did! With the closing, we have people stopping by who want to have one of the tables. I'm sad about the closing.

Rick Marcoux, a regular at Pete's (and Historical Commission Chair) commented that the area now used by Walgreens at the intersection of Rts 140 and 126 and Pete's was where important town business was conducted. Selectmen met weekly and would adjourn to Pete's or Marie's restaurant to solve local town problems.

The Historical Commission is putting together a photo album of Pete's Bluebird history. If you have any photos to add, please let us know!

*As told to Marjorie Turner Hollman, member of the Bellingham Historical Commission. She is a long-time Bellingham resident, Personal Historian and Freelance Writer. She can be reached at 508-613-6541, [Marjorie@marjorieturner.com](mailto:Marjorie@marjorieturner.com), or [www.marjorieturner.com](http://www.marjorieturner.com)*

## THE KEYSTONE BRIDGES OF BELLINGHAM

*This article was written with information from issue 138 of the Crimpville Comments, c1997.*

Keystone bridges have been in existence since the early days of civilization. They are built in the shape of an arch. The keystone is the central stone at the top of the arch. Any weight on the bridge presses down on the keystone. The pressure then pushes against the blocks next to the keystone and then on down the bridge from block to block. The stones permanently bind because of their wedge-shapes, thus making the structure exceptionally strong.

Keystone bridges were once symbols of the nation's industrial ingenuity. This style of bridge was adopted by the railroads and spanned many creeks and rivers. One in Bellingham still spans the Stall Brook along the old railroad line from North Bellingham to Caryville.

The Depot Street bridge, spanning the Charles River was built in 1829 to provide easier and quicker transportation from the "turnpike" to the Meeting House in the center of town. Aaron Thayer is credited with building the bridge. Sadly, this bridge was lost due to the widening of the road and expansion of the bridge.



*Keystone Bridge over Peter's River, circa 2019*

In 1835, the town appropriated \$100 to build a keystone bridge over the Peter's River in South Bellingham. It can now be found at the entrance to Arcand Park.

These bridges are historical and cultural features that should not be ignored and lost. The rugged spans have served well and continue to do so.

We are lucky to have these historic structures in town, a reminder of the hard work of members of the community in days gone by.



## ASSUMPTION PARISH 1927-2004

*In 1997 Assumption Parish celebrated its 70th Anniversary. The information about the parish in this article is from a variety of sources, including a Crimpville Comments article from the 1997 Anniversary year. The Parish was located at 1 Wrentham Street.*



The first Mass at Assumption Parish was celebrated in a large tent that had been erected on the existing vacant lot next to what was, until 2010, the rectory.

The tent served as the church until September 11, 1927 when services were first celebrated in a converted garage across the street. The garage was converted into a 2-story building and a 2-story ell was added to the right side of the building. This was Assumption Church until May 1960.

In the meantime, the parish opened their own parochial school in 1956. It had 8 classrooms, 2 offices and a large basement hall that was used for social events. The school, staffed by the Sisters of Presentation of Mary, was quickly filled to capacity. By 1960 the parish had additional

classrooms and a new chapel-church. By August 1960 all Masses were celebrated in Assumption Church.

The first pastor was Rev. Donat Binette. In 1930 he was replaced by Rev. Emile DuPont. Then the following April, Rev. DuPont was replaced by Rev. Father Albert Bergeron, the long serving priest who came to the parish as Assistant Pastor in his first assignment after ordination. Rev. Rene Julian was assigned as Fr. Bergeron's assistant in 1953. During their tenure the parish grew from a small church to a parochial school and a new place of worship. Fr. Bergeron left in 1966 and was replaced by Rev. Noel Giard. He was replaced by Rev. Charles Aubut who served for the next 20 years.

It was during that time that it was announced that the school would close in June of 1974. A thanksgiving banquet was organized to honor and thank the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary for the 19 years of dedication to the children of Assumption Parish.

Throughout the rest of the 20th century, the parish maintained a religious instruction program, an active CYO program and other parish organizations that contributed to the parish.

In 2004, Assumption was one of 82 churches closed by the Archdiocese of Boston. The final Mass was held on August 29, 2004 and St. Blaise Church on South Main Street was the designated receiver parish for Assumption parishioners.

In 2010 the school and church buildings were demolished and a Walgreen's Pharmacy was built on the land. It is currently the location of Bellingham Urgent Care.

## MARIE'S RESTAURANT

Marie's Restaurant was mentioned in the Pete's Bluebird article as another town landmark where local business took place. This led us to want to document more about Marie's!

Marie's Restaurant, according to a 1997 issue of the Crimpville Comments, was originally known as Sullivan's Tavern, was located in the town center on Mechanic Street, on a portion of the land where the current Walgreen's Pharmacy is located.



## MARIE'S RESTAURANT (Continued)



*Bruce Lord, Scott Ambler, Lee Ambler, Mary Ambler, Paul Chupa and unknown person meeting at Marie's*

Commission Member Marjorie Turner Hollman met with Marie Roy, the owner of the restaurant, to get her memories of her time at the restaurant.

In 1970 Marie's uncle Donald Moore bought the property where the restaurant was located. It was already a restaurant owned by the Rogozns.

Her uncle asked her to run the restaurant. The previous owners stayed on for the first year to assist. Marie said she had no restaurant experience except for waitressing at the Colonial House (formerly Hebert's, which was located on the corner of Mechanic and South Main Streets, where the Charles River Bank is located now).

She had been working at Backer as a stitcher. Don co-signed a lot of loans to assist her and she rented the building from him. He supported her and enabled her to operate the restaurant for 28 years.

Her husband of 45 years, Bob Roy was handy and repaired and cleaned up the property when they took it over.

Marie states the restaurant was "nothing fancy, everyday folks ate there. I had customers bring me food they didn't want to cook and asked me to cook it for them. I saw what was on sale at the grocery store and that is what would be put on special. People brought me in ideas for dishes I could put on the menu. My uncle brought me menus from other diners to give me ideas of what I could put on my menu."

Marie had no set menu. As she had never cooked for a restaurant she figured it was like cooking for a large family. (She had 5 step children.) The lunch menu varied and there was a different soup on the menu each day. The breakfast menu didn't change, there was always eggs, bacon, etc. on the menu.

Marie enjoyed running the restaurant and loved going to work. She said it didn't feel like work. She wishes she had named it Marie's Diner as she found it more casual than a restaurant, it offered a counter area and a dining room with informal friendliness!

Marie went on to tell this story: "Once I told Bill Hood's father that I didn't know how to make gravy. He came back in the kitchen and showed me how to make gravy so there were no lumps in it."

Marie states the restaurant was open 7 days a week for breakfast and lunch. Pete's Bluebird was open for dinner, so Marie noted there was no competition between the two local restaurants.

When Don Moore died his sons inherited his properties. One of the sons inherited the property where the restaurant was located and the land was sold. The location of the restaurant is now the location of Walgreens.

Marie and her father were both born in Bellingham. He was born in Charles River Grove, next to High Street. She grew up in Bellingham, and still lives on Mechanic Street. When she was a child she loved riding her bike down Mechanic Street to South Maple Street and going along the old trolley tracks to Silver Lake. Until the 1940s the metal rails were still there.

Her husband drove a motorcycle and she was his passenger until he became ill. She tried to drive it but had difficulty until she found a motorcycle group that helped her learn how to drive it. She now drives a trike motorbike and goes to group events and loves riding and does it whenever she can!



*Marie Roy on her "Trike Motorbike"*

## CRIMPVILLE COMMENTS

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