

Society and Sundaes

A Research Paper by Ian Torres

Ice cream is popular, not only in this century, but for a long time. Since the founding of our nation, ice cream had become the most popular desserts in America. However there have been many changes in the way we conduct your selves. Though much time has passed and many changes have taken place one thing remains the same; Americans still love their ice cream. No matter what societal changes have taken place, most Americans as a whole, continue to take pleasure in this most delicious treat. Ice cream is sold in pretty much any establishment where food is sold, from grocery stores, to convenience stores, to restaurants and parlors that specialize in sale of only ice cream. In fact, ice cream would, in time, become a huge industrial conglomerate, in its own right. But while we will always continue to consume ice cream the way we eat it has changed over time. The way we eat our foods will change, particularly with ice cream. Where an individual could purchase their treats has changed, as well as its popularity. The evolution of ice cream has not changed much since the 1700's, however the different types of ice cream have. The ice cream sundae in particular has changed the most. When we could no longer obtain your delicious treats, the ice cream parlors, and soda fountains of the times came up with a new and ingenious confection known as an ice cream sundae. At one point it was an unheard of dish, but soon it would became the most popular dessert in America. The demand for ice cream has changed a lot on many occasions, and the best example of this change in society can be explained with the ice cream sundae.

It is a fact that the way we ate some foods back then is quite different from the way we eat it today. Ice cream is no different but is in some ways the exception to the rule. It was once considered a dessert reserved only for kings and those considered as of the royal status. In America ice cream has become a dessert for everyone. Since then there never has been any challenge to ice cream or such desserts. Throughout the 1800's Americans have been trying to

obtain more ice cream, and produce it in massive quantities, at a faster rate. It was also at this time that the soda fountain appeared and possibly the first big societal change to ice cream. Ice cream has been popular in parlors and stores, but the soda fountain was a public social place for everyone to obtain their treats. However the soda fountains were known primarily for serving sodas and waters in a different variety of ways. It would take a big leap to change the standard of soda fountains when it was decided to serve ice cream and particularly ice cream sundaes.

Ice cream sundaes out of any kind of ice cream dessert went through the most societal changes. It was the answer to the once dwindling soda fountain businesses and the dessert of choice for those in pursuit of the fancier things in life, which also took place during the middle of some the most turbulent times in American society. The sundae was not just a dessert, it was a symbol for the populous and an excellent example of the changing times that Americans would be facing during the early 20th century. It was the main product at the large public beverage center, the soda fountain. A soda fountain was a place for people from all over the community to gather, chat and have their favorite beverages, ice cream and sundaes. However, the development of the fountains took some time and it would not be until the 1890's that the soda fountain's main attraction would become the most popular ice cream sundae.

At a soda fountain the ice cream sundae was a delicacy. Based on the *Dispenser's Formulary*, an ice cream sundae was served with a highly measured quality of ice cream, topped with many varieties of toppings particularly crushed fruits, one or more syrups, whipped cream, marshmallows and nuts, and more often than not, cherries. Similar to the sundae was the banana split as it was a type of sundae, but larger, made with real fruit such as a banana and in a store would usually cost more. The only other alternative to a sundae was a college ice which

had ice cream or sherbet with only one kind of syrup or fruit.¹ According the *Dispenser's Formulary* the most basic sundae is made like this:

"In an ice cream sundae saucer or dish put one spoonful of whipped cream, pressing it into a circular shape. Upon it was placed one large-sized cone-shaped serving of vanilla cream. Press the ice cream down so as to form a roll or ridge of whipped cream all around the base of the cone. Stud the ice cream with choice currants, top with a fresh cherry, and sprinkle over with a spoonful of chopped roasted almonds."²

Sundaes have a direct connection to ice cream, but unlike the ice cream, sundaes were created out of pivotal societal changes and political issues. Through this change the sundae would become a success and be praised for its accomplishments for decades. However in order for sundaes to be such a success, in the early 1900's ice cream had to be success for everyone in America first. Most of the sundaes progress can easily be contributed to ice cream and its popularity. There is an obvious connection with sundaes and ice cream as a dessert; sundaes were created from a shift in society and by soda fountains businesses which were in much need of a change in menu. Ice cream was a success to begin with in America, but only with a select few. It was only brought out on special occasions, and mainly for the rich. However, even if it was only for the rich, Americans still liked ice cream. The only problem was with the production, storage and business end. These problems would quickly be fixed in a short amount of time in history.

By the 1800s, ice cream was an occasional item as the cream was made in small batches and due to the lack of insulated freezers, would spoil very quickly. At this time people would

¹ *Dispenser's Formulary; or Soda Water Guide*. New York: Soda Fountain Publications, 1915. 29

² *Dispenser's Formulary*. 4th ed. New York: Soda Fountain Publications, 1925. 119

store large chunks of ice in underground storage areas, straw houses and of course ice houses. The ice was gathered from lakes and could only be cut during the winter. When one wanted ice cream, they would use the pot freezer method, which involved placing a bowl of cream in a bucket of ice and salt. Only a select few could do this, so only ice cream parlors or other such establishments would do this task. The end product was a very chunky slush, and not quite the product we would identify with ice cream. In 1843, Nancy Johnson invented a freezer like machine to make ice cream faster and much more smooth using a hand crank churning device similar to those used to churn butter. Simply add the desired ingredients and churn the product to your desired consistency. Nancy Johnson's "Artificial Freezer", ice cream machine was a great invention which made for great home activity, if only one could afford the device. Also from her machine many flavors of ice cream emerged, and in some ways put ice cream in America's ice boxes.³

There were many kinds of ice cream in America during the 1800's. But before the modern commercialization of ice cream people mainly stuck with the ever traditional vanilla ice cream. With the introduction of Nancy Johnson's machine people could now make their own ice cream at home. American's would create strawberry and chocolate flavored ice creams as well, but usually they went to the ice cream parlors. Ice cream was not a huge business until the 1850's. By then large factories were built to produce ice cream and ship them all across the nation. These factories were founded by dairy manufacturers, which also gave them a way to use their left over cream. As a result of this newly found means of mass production, ice cream costs dropped, and by the 1900's everyone, especially the lower class was buying ice cream. With the

³ Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 95

wide spread availability of the frozen treat, new recipes were founded and became part of the soda fountain scene.⁴

This is where all of society could gather and mingle, a place once called the soda fountain. The soda fountain was everybody's stop shop for sodas, medicinal waters, floats, ice cream, and sundaes. However, the ice cream was popular for a long time so fountains during the early to mid 19th century mainly sold flattened soda waters, beer, alcohol, carbonated soda, seltzer's, and the medicinal waters. For the most part soda fountains, before the reduction of soda drinks and ice cream, during the 20th century were medical shops like a pharmacy, and the soda jerks the soda fountain attendants were the druggists. However these were not your typical traveling peddlers selling snake oil and different elixirs that they said would cure anything from dandruff to lumbago. They were real physicians, and based on the medical science of the time, it was believed that such beverages would cure specific ailments.

Depending on the location of certain patrons soda fountains in drugstores offered specialized remedies or medical waters, which were beverages intended for medical aides. The most common of these was the bicarbonate soda which of course was used to help the body's digestion. However many beverages were consumed for a variety of elements such as nervousness, diarrhea, indigestion, and hangovers or headaches. Many of these drinks contained syrup, grape juice, lemon juice, ice, ginger, bitters of any flavor, an assortment of wines, and especially soda. These were not medical waters, they were beverages of science. By the mid-of

⁴ "Ice Cream: A Brief History." YouTube. June 28, 2008. Accessed September 24, 2014.

the 19th century caffeinated beverages sold at soda fountains were intended to treat pneumonia, nausea, headaches, and exhaustion. This special elixir became known as Coca-Cola.⁵

The Soda Fountain business depended upon several criteria. One of which was the kind of service being presented. This job filled the youthful lad who manned the business end of the soda fountain and was the public face of the ice cream industry, known as the “soda jerk”. The soda jerk was your entertainer, showman, and bartender, who would “jerk” the soda draft arm or spigot to create your beverage. It was this jerking motion that the phrase “Soda Jerk.” was coined. They were usually smart, witty, and talented. People would come for miles to drink their beverages, ice creams, and watch as the soda jerk would put on a show. The frequent use of the large, shiny spigots and the showmanship of the soda jerks made him the center of attention in a soda fountain.⁶

Early soda jerks were usually the business owners of the store. It was not till the turn of the 20th century that the soda jerks were young boys trying to make an honest pay. Youthful soda jerks were to go to special soda fountain classes or study formulas to learn about the soda fountain business and trade. By the 20’ and 30’s soda jerks were the main public faces in towns across America. Small town American citizens would congregate around the soda fountain or drugstore. The popularity of the soda jerk reached its peak in the 1950’s when they mainly consisted on working in diners and sold fast food meals and ice cream products like sundaes.

As mentioned before the man standing behind the counter at a soda fountain was sometimes acknowledged as a physician, or a medical doctor, one which does not have a medical degree. It was for this reason why many frowned upon the idea of the dispensers selling

⁵ Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 124-125

⁶ "Soda Jerks." Soda Jerks. Accessed September 24, 2014. <http://www.sodajerksusa.com/history/>.

medicine. It was also not a wise idea for youthful employees selling drugs without have any kind of medical experience. Only with proper advice from actual druggist can soda fountains sell medicine. This was typical in the early soda fountains in the 1850's when these stores sold mineral and medical based drinks. With the introduction to larger ice cream sales particularly sundaes, soda fountains would slowly stop selling these drinks and soda jerks would mainly focus on ice cream related desserts and beverages. It would take a long line of societal change for the soda jerk to become almost like a standard restaurant waiter from a medical alchemist.

Besides all the medical beverages, and caffeinated drinks, the best addition to the soda fountain was the ice cream soda; which for a long time did not contain any ice cream. During the Civil War soda fountains began selling soda water mixed with fruit syrup, shaved ice, and sweet cream. This kind of beverage was similar to what the Romans were having as “ice cream” over 2000 years ago. Shaved ice with the addition of cream along with the free flavor became known as an “iced cream soda”. Since there was legitimate ice cream. They were also mentioned as “fridge cream soda” or “ice cream soda”, contrary to the fact that no ice cream was in the beverage. It makes the creation of the ice cream soda seem anticlimactic and predictable by some.⁷

It wasn't until 1874 that ice cream was used in ice cream sodas. These sodas would become very proper drinks as they would contain syrups of many different flavors, flattened sodas stirred to perfection and topped with a scoop of the desired choice of ice cream.⁸ As one of the original stories goes Robert M. Green of Philadelphia was the operator of a soda fountain at

⁷ Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 125

⁸ Eighmey, Rae Katherine. *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition*. 1st ed. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 80

the 1874 semi-centennial exhibition of the Franklin Institute. While during his shift wind circulated around that he ran out sweet cream. As an alternative to cream he went out and bought ice cream and planned to let it melt before he substituted it for sweet cream. Green's customers were building up and were eager for the ice cream sodas. The ice cream was not melting quick enough and was still frozen when he made the ice cream sodas, and it was there that the ice cream soda was born, and it quickly began to become the most popular treat at soda fountains. Robert Green basically became famous overnight. Signs in many soda fountains began promoting Green's ice cream sundaes along with many varieties of flavors such as vanilla, strawberry, and chocolate ice cream. Many believed that Green probably planned the creation of the ice cream soda. He could have just gotten more cream instead of ice cream. No matter the story, ice cream sodas were becoming the most popular product in soda fountains across America, but its contents would be too good for some.⁹

The ice cream sundae was a product of the soda fountains. However little is known about when or where the creation of the ice cream sundae began. The best research determines the Sundae, or recipes for Sundaes were published in 1897 by the modern Guide of soda dispensaries. There is no definitive evidence about where, when or why sundaes were invented, but the best explanation for the creation of the sundae began around the very controversial blue laws and the banning of ice cream sodas on Sundays. Blue laws were nothing special in America, but from small sources, the effects of the blue laws would be felt by everyone in America, through the form of sundaes. During the colonial period's blue laws were enacted to prohibit certain activities on the Sabbath, holy days, and/or on Sunday's. But for many years blue laws banned many activities, which in most cases was ill enforced. In 1890, only a few Blue Laws

⁹ Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 125-126

mention soda water as a banned beverage. Soda waters and ice cream sodas were seen as just as intoxicating as alcohol. Coca Cola, and Pepsi products were probably the most hit from blue laws in the 1890's.¹⁰

America's Blue laws ran into conflicts with religion and business. States that had Blue law's of which there were a few stores and soda fountains allowed to remain open as long as no sodas and or alcoholic beverages were sold. While at some point most states that had blue laws, only the laws concerning alcoholic beverages are mentioned. Also some blue laws only affected some towns in the state as well. Maryland's Blue laws banned soda and mineral waters along with tobacco, candy, and alcoholic beverages on Sunday. Louisiana allowed sales at drugstores, bakeries, restaurants, theaters and other places of amusement on Sunday as long as no intoxicating drinks were sold. Minnesota allowed the sale of only prescription drugs and medicines, but no sodas. Texas demanded stores to only sell ice cream and nothing else on the Sabbath. A similar scenario was enforced in Utah, but most establishments could not sell any products.¹¹

With the long list of states in which Blue Laws were enacted and the irrational means of these laws, it is clear evidence that the invention of the sundae is often attributed to soda fountain owners, soda jerks, and druggist defying the law. Most stories revolve around the idea that a clever soda fountain operator left out the soda to his products and top ice cream with syrup instead of soda. In a sense a rather simple and rather basic story, however there were many stories circulating around about who, when and where the creation of the sundae took place. There is one story what many believe is the correct version of events around the invention of the

¹⁰ "Ice Cream: A Brief History." YouTube. June 28, 2008. Accessed September 24, 2014.

¹¹ "The Food Timeline: History Notes--ice Cream." The Food Timeline: History Notes--ice Cream. January 1, 2004. Accessed October 10, 2014.

sundae. In Evanston, Illinois a Methodist town sometimes called Heavenston whose local pastor preached of Sabbath, Satan, and Sodas, passed a local city ordinance prohibiting the sale for ice cream sodas on Sunday which was called the “Sunday Soda Menace”. In defiance of these blue laws, soda fountain employees decide to create an ice cream soda without the soda and the end result was the ice cream sundae.¹² Some people give credit of the invention of the ice cream sundae to, President Theodore Roosevelt because he banned ice cream sodas on Sunday. Soda fountain operators in turn created the sundae. Roosevelt, at the time was head of New York City's Police Board, and made public the closure of soda fountains. Since he was against soda fountains in the first place, Roosevelt is not credited for the sundae.¹³

The main version of the creation of the sundae comes from Ithaca, New York.¹⁴ Unlike many scenarios in which the reverend opposed the soda; in 1892 a Unitarian Priest John M. Scott went to a local drug store after his service one Sunday, and ordered a Vanilla ice cream. Chester Platt who operated of the fountain added topping, cherry syrup and a cherries to the pastors dish. Pastor Scott loved the treat and called it the “Cherry Sunday”. Platt would later come up with similar creation in strawberry, chocolate, and pineapple. The Ithaca Daily Journal ran ads in the newspaper saying “A new 10 cent Ice Cream Specialty, Served only at Platt & Colt’s Famous day and night Soda Fountain”.¹⁵

Whatever the creation of the sundae may be, the citizens of America were not to give up soda fountains without a fight, and the invention of the ice cream sundae gave America that

¹² Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 127

¹³ "The Food Timeline: History Notes--ice Cream." The Food Timeline: History Notes--ice Cream. January 1, 2004. Accessed October 10, 2014.

¹⁴ "Ithaca: Home of the Ice Cream Sundae." Ice Cream Sundae History. Accessed September 24, 2014.

¹⁵ Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 127

chance. But it wasn't just the invention of the sundae that put the treat on the map; it had become popular very quickly. JB Porter was there when the ice cream sundae became an American phenomenon. Porter was the manager of Kaercher's Pharmacy in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. The fountain at the pharmacy was a popular hangout for high school students from the Shadyside Academy where every day they would come to get ice cream sodas and fizzy drinks except on Sunday. On Sunday afternoons the students would come into the soda-less store and shout out all kinds of combinations as they all ordered their 'college ices'. This weekly mayhem of students at the soda fountain became known as the Sunday affair, as students would come in and ask for a 'Sunday'. The name stuck and became popular with the students. As the students went off to college they spread the Sunday name around. The early versions of the word were sunday, sondie, sundi, sundhi, sundae, and sundaye but would later be changed to sundae.¹⁶

In some places they were referred to as college ices. These were mainly in college towns and became popular with female students. It was believed that it was the college girls of Worcester, Massachusetts that invented the college ice. Generally the college ices were just ice in a glass filled with toppings, but many soda jerks would add ice cream and sherbet instead. The college ices were served before the 1890's but with the introduction of blue laws, the sundae became known as college ices or college sodas in college towns. Some people called them "throwovers", as a sundae was simply ice cream with toppings thrown over it.¹⁷ In the classification of desserts the college ice is just like a sundae, and many say that there really is no

¹⁶ Eighmey, Rae Katherine. *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition*. 1st ed. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 98

¹⁷ Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 128

difference, but for many it was a new and delicious product added to soda fountains and the college ice was just as sociable a dessert as sundaes.¹⁸

It was societal changes and strain on the business of ice cream stores that created the new dessert. The preachers and reverends of America had tried their hardest to ban sodas in many places in the United States, and if they had gotten their way the soda fountains, drugstores, and ice cream parlors would lose a large portion of their business, the ice cream soda. The days of mineral waters, carbonated drinks and medicines in soda fountains disappeared with the introduction of ice cream soda, and it would look like many stores could go under. But because of the Sundae; the response from hundreds of soda fountain owners and soda jerks across America, the days during the Blue laws brought more business to the soda fountain than ever before. Before the Blue laws there were over 50,000 soda fountains in 1895. Because of the sundae the numbers were growing at breakneck speeds.¹⁹ A survey done by the “New York Herald Tribune” in 1906 reported that the soda fountain had surpassed the saloon in quantity and popularity in New York City because of ice cream sundaes. Since the sundae became introduced on the menus in stores all over the United States, Americans began to crave for the treat and many services began to offer the dessert in many areas. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company made modifications to one of the passenger cars and transformed it into an ice cream parlor which specialized in sundaes as well as other desserts at any time day or night. Sundaes and ice cream were on a major upswing, and would continue on this popularity increase for decades.²⁰

¹⁸ Funderburg, Anne. *Sundae Best: History of Soda Fountains*. 1st ed. Popular Press 1, 2001.65

¹⁹ Funderburg, Anne. *Sundae Best: History of Soda Fountains*. 1st ed. Popular Press 1, 2001.43

²⁰ Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 128

Making sundaes in a soda fountain was a specialty. Some people who wanted to be soda jerks had to go to classes and learn to become masters of syrup and ice cream. In soda fountains the soda jerk and his workers would perfect their crafts with different sundaes, and make sure all of his equipment was kept in good order. However no one in a soda fountain would remember all of the different kinds of sundaes, so sundaes in the 1910's were either made from recipe books like *The Dispenser's Formulary* or on special occasions. Since there were so many different kinds, usually the customer would tell the soda jerk what he wanted on his sundae, and he would create his brand of sundae. If customers ask for sundaes or college ices, the soda jerk would first give the patron a glass of water or crackers, as if he were at a restaurant. This practice was proper and usually done in small towns or neighborhood areas. These were the exception, and main brands would only be sold in larger cities. If the sundae he ordered had strong flavors like chocolate, coffee, or maple, soda jerks would offer salty crackers. If the flavors were fruity such as strawberry or pineapple, he would offer sweet crackers. This was all part of the practice in the sundae business and was used to satisfy the customer with his or her product of choice.²¹

Since the introduction of sundaes into soda fountains, the toppings underwent the most change and variety. The two main ingredients that began the sundae topping were the chop suey topping, and marshmallow. It was from these two that the nut topping as well as fig, maple, and butterscotch came from. While the topping is considered the money maker from the sundae business, the topping was not used too often. In many places, the soda fountain may serve sundaes without toppings, as the toppings would often spoil. Such toppings as French candied fruits, ginger, and figs would go bad in two to three days and any unused topping would need to be thrown out. If it was a hot day, the toppings would spoil even quicker. It is obviously unwise to

²¹ *Dispenser's Formulary*. 4th ed. New York: Soda Fountain Publications, 1925. 105

serve sundaes with bad toppings. So toppings were served for special occasions and for daily specials. The most popular toppings in the area would be used as a regular topping. There were several different types of chocolate and maple topping. Also according to *The Dispenser's Formulary* there were 5 different ways on making butterscotch topping. This is important, it is the topping and not the ice cream itself that would have the lasting flavor in your mouth.²²

The *Dispenser's Formulary* of 1925 published that New York City lists 275 sundae recipes. This book provides names on the most popular sundaes and their contents. In reality there can be thousands and thousands of Sundaes just in the 1920s alone. They came up with some of the most creative names for their products such as the Automobile, Chop Suey Mix, Dove of Peace, Fandango Sandwich, Tasty Toasty, Uncle Jake and Yama Yama. Sundaes became popular with the territory that you are in. Just as New York has a pizza, and Chicago has a hot dog, almost every city has its own specific Sundae. The names could be as generic as the San Francisco Sundae to very interesting names like the Kansas City Sunflower or the (Las Vegas) Neon Sundae. There are also some discrepancies with the names given to sundaes. *The Dispenser's Formulary* states that there are multiple sundaes with the same name. The name of the sundae may also conflict with the type of dessert. Starting the 1920's there was a change by the soda fountains and the ice cream shops to come up with a standard name and data system for all sundaes. Fountain owners and the fountain trade wanted to create a standardization system of sundae names. Generally the coined sundaes in the dozens of formulary book published were the standard. Only a local or personal touch to a sundae can a name be coined, or for special events. It was to make sure that whatever the customer wants the customer gets.²³

²² *Dispenser's Formulary*. 4th ed. New York: Soda Fountain Publications, 1925. 151

²³ *Dispenser's Formulary*. 4th ed. New York: Soda Fountain Publications, 1925. 29

Sundaes became part of the era of advertising. Slips in menus, pictures, magazines, and cardboard cut outs were all means to bring the attention to the public. In order to attract customers, soda jerks would give sundaes a wide variety of names and themes. The first sundae themes were seasonal or patriotic. There were some sundae names that were very generic, like the Labor Day sundae, but there were sundaes with special variety. On Washington's Birthday, one can order a sundae with Mount Vernon Topping which was melted sugar dyed pink. Or the Bunker Hill Sundae for a Revolutionary War theme which was a vanilla sundae with lots of nuts, cherries, and a small American flag on top. On holidays soda jerks would advertise these on posters in their store windows. Truly any kind of sundae could be used for an occasion, but the name along with the theme would always boost sales.²⁴ However it is important for the fountains to maintain a connection to the public. Names for sundaes had to be catchy and so fancy names were not given to sundaes. The name and type of sundae was important, however it was possible that type of sundae that did not sell to well would bring in more profits, just by changing the name and adding a theme; as long as it did not conflict with the sundae standardization system. In these cases customers would demand to know what was in their sundae's fountains, owners would hang posters or indicate in pamphlets and on menus which ingredients were in their desserts. Again this was all for a good connection to the public, and the sundae business achieved this very well.²⁵

Possibly the best way to understand how people used to live and the culture they had is through their food and the names they gave their food. The ice cream sundae, just by the names of the desserts tells so much of the pop culture of the 1920's. Bartenders and soda jerks of soda fountains were quite creative in their presentations of their products. Regular ice cream sundaes

²⁴ *Dispenser's Formulary*. 4th ed. New York: Soda Fountain Publications, 1925. 105

²⁵ *Dispenser's Formulary*. 4th ed. New York: Soda Fountain Publications, 1925. 11-12

as well as other concoctions were based of the day's famous people, places, music, and politics. Just by the name of the sundae one can learn a lot form the culture. For example groovy music and dancing of the roaring 20's created the "Tango" sundae, a large sundae with chocolate ice cream, heavy chocolate dressing, nuts, and peach slices. Or the "Bull Moose" a Marshmallow sundae with two froufrou wafers was named after the progressive party started by Theodore Roosevelt. "Mutt and Jeff" was based on the comic strip of the same name, the "Dreamland Sundae" was named after an amusement part in Chicago, and the "Culebra Cut" was named after the dig site of the Panama Canal. This was just a few; by 1925 there were possibly hundreds of desserts named after such things. These kinds of products made sundaes stick more with the public and to show that their establishment and products were with the times and the days' themes and culture.²⁶

Sundaes were a hit all across America. By the Roaring Twenties people would be ordering sundaes like crazy. Soda fountains were now a place where hard working Americans could take a break from their jobs and enjoy the finer things in life like their favorite beverages, ice creams, and sundaes. These establishments were also great public centers where family, socialites, students, and couples could gather and socialize. By this time the dessert once served in a bowl, was now put into a fancy glass. Many Americans were interested in the luxuries of life and the fancy glasses used for sundaes really put a sense of style and class to ones meal. Soda fountains not only added sundaes to their list of products, but college ices, milkshakes, banana splits and a returning favorite ice cream sodas became popular across America. They were seen as fancy drinks almost as an exotic dessert. It was because of this that the sundae and the soda fountain scene would appeal more to women, as the soda fountain was a social place to chat, and

²⁶ "Food Timeline: 1920s Ice Cream Specials." Food Timeline: 1920s Ice Cream Specials. November 4, 2013. Accessed October 10, 2014.

enjoy each other's company. Soon prohibition was setting in and many wondered what would be the fate for beverage stores, like soda fountains. Soda fountains would need business and because of prohibition, that is exactly what they got.

What was bad for liquor was good for ice cream and sundaes. Starting before the 1920's prohibition laws in many states forced local bars and liquor stores to close. By 1917 over half of the states were already feeling the sting of prohibition laws.²⁷ Breweries and distribution centers sect on producing alcohol, but in some ways, many of them did not close or stop production. They would be producing another kind of product, ice cream. The ever growing ice cream business put local bars back to work, not by selling alcohol, but ice cream. Barflies looking for work became soda jerks at fountains. Breweries that once produce endless countless amounts of beer were gutted for new machinery to produce ice cream. Soda fountains, drug stores, and ice cream parlors have never had it so good. Sundaes had reached the pinnacle of its popularity and everyone in society made the sundae a symbol of the changing time and part of the growing social movements in American society.²⁸

During the early days of prohibition, anti-saloon league campaigns put out an image that man of the house would take a family's wages and spend it at saloons and bars. It was also at this time that women start to take action against alcohol. While most women probably once wheeled a hatchet like Carrie Nation, the woman suffrage and prohibition movements began to spread across America and it started in the soda fountains. By 1917 women had more power over political issues such as prohibition, and many people realized that a woman's views on prohibition in the long-term matter. During the 1920s women began to build campaigns to

²⁷ Eighmey, Rae Katherine. *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition*. 1st ed. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 74

²⁸ "Ice Cream: A Brief History." YouTube. June 28, 2008. Accessed September 24, 2014.

support prohibition, and one thing they would do is praise soda fountains for their work and products. Women built an image that the soda fountains, beverages, ice cream, and sundaes are a better alternative than booze and alcohol. The soda fountains were actually more than happy to having women basically advertise their products. “Women have long figured amongst dispensaries best customers and for them have consecrated the most delicious and elaborate sundaes, such as the DTS beverages, the most delicately flavored creams and ices”. Soda fountains would be more than glad to appeal to women’s tastes. It was because of this that sundaes like the “American Girl Sundae” were created. A “Suffragist” sundae was a banana split like sundae which consisted of one banana, crushed pineapple and strawberries, with three ice cream flavors of any kind. These sundaes or banana splits were part of the social movement of women suffrage, and a symbol for women to use against alcohol and support prohibition. Women were finally having a voice on the issues of the day, and they use the sundae as their slogan of choice.²⁹

Sundaes were already popular, and they were now in the spotlight in some of the biggest political movements in American history. Now the question soda fountain owners minds during the prohibition days was, can sundaes and ice cream be bigger than the most popular beverage of all time, alcohol? During Prohibition many who wanted an alternative to alcohol wanted waters or sodas like Coca-Cola or Pepsi. Many others switched to ice cream and sundaes. However some in the soda trade were optimistic, but others believed that ice cream, and soft beverages from soda fountains and parlors could be bigger than booze. Soda manufactures in Minneapolis say a 50% increase in sales in July of 1919. Ice cream businesses have never seen bigger sales in

²⁹ Eighmey, Rae Katherine. *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition*. 1st ed. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 74-77

years. Even sundaes and sodas were selling more than non-alcoholic drinks. Soda fountains were doing well not just by the laws banning alcohol, but even by newer products. While there were new sundae concoctions other specials, like milkshakes, and banana splits were becoming just as popular. For those who loved alcohol, there was a wide range of options for an alternative to the bottle.³⁰

The Soda Fountain business was booming during prohibition with a maximum of a Five hundred million dollars in sales at it height in the 20's. The business of soda fountains was flourishing. By 1925 there were 91,241 real soda fountains in the country, each getting an average daily sale of \$46.10 per fountain. Some of the best and most popular fountains can have over 90 dollars in sales a day. The majority of these stores were store owned soda fountains, about 40,000 of them. The rest were in drug stores, general stores, department stores, as well as other business and entertainment areas like amusement parks. However it was best for these businesses to be close together. It attracts service, and attention, as well as competition. Most of these sales came from Eastern States mainly New York, Pennsylvania, and Boston, since they had the highest population and most businesses for soda fountains. The best kept, and good quality soda fountains which produce the most desired beverages and ice cream became the most profitable. Later on the most entertaining and well advertized shops would become the most popular.³¹

There was also one more thing that made soda fountains more popular during prohibition and that was the introduction of modern entertainment in these businesses. The soda fountain

³⁰ Eighmey, Rae Katherine. *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition*. 1st ed. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 116

³¹ "Food Timeline: 1920s Ice Cream Specials." Food Timeline: 1920s Ice Cream Specials. November 4, 2013. Accessed October 10, 2014.

was a place of the latest entertainment and the sundae was seen as a dessert for the classy. It would seem logical to put the newest entertainment the 1920's had to offer into these establishments. Soda jerks and fountain owners had to create their types of entertainment. Sundaes had names and themes for holidays, people, music and culture of the time. However many business realized that the letting the customers have input on their products was unique. Fountains, drugstores, and ice cream parlors would ask the customers in put on new products. More women than men had input on this. They would come up with new sundaes, sodas, coffees and types of hot chocolate. But the soda fountain business was a very competitive affaire. Rivalries were fierce as some of businesses were just right across the street from each other in some of the bigger cities. New products would not be enough to attract away from other establishments.

The soda fountain scene while popular to everyone was becoming a place of courtship and for dating couples. This trend would last all the way to the 1970's, but it would begin during prohibition. Soda business would find a lot of demand for drinks and other products that revolved around the dating scene and the soda fountain were more than happy to help. New sundaes like the "Kiss me again", or "lover's delight" were popular with many couples. "What could quicken a bashful lover than to have his coy companion say I would like a "soul kiss" (sundae) wouldn't you, John?" Many advertisements would say that the quietest way to a woman's heart was an ice cream sundae. There were dozens of lover themed sundaes. Most of these like the "Have-a-Date" Sundae and "Cupids Garden" would have two or more spoons, as well as two or more flavors, just for couples. Some of the most popular were the "Cupid's

Delight” Sundae with many different variations. It is no wonder that the most profitable day of the year for soda fountains was Valentine’s Day.³²

Many soda fountains would turn to technology for livening up their business. Radios have been around for a while before the 1920s, and if one can afford them were an excellent source of entertainment in the modern American household. However the radio was not as common as it is today. Before 1922 there were 378 radio stations on the air, in only 225 cities. Many of these radio stations could only travel a couple of miles and were generally located in major populated areas. So it was customary for people to gather around the radio and listen to the daily news or sports. Soda men took up this idea and put radio receiving stations in their fountains and allow patrons with the charge of a sundae to listen to the radio. Just installing a radio into a local soda fountain would make that business a social hub and community gathering center. The majority of these stations were talk shows, but soda fountains would offer sports broadcasts as well, which would appeal more to men. The products sold were just a change more than anything. For one to listen for an hour or two to the radio would need to order any sundae of the patrons own choice, the soda fountains most popular product. But the installation of radios in soda fountains was short. Better transmitters were built and the prices of radios were decreasing, it was a lot easier for people to obtain radios and the soda fountains would need a new gimmick.³³

This came with the introduction of the latest in public entertainment, moving pictures.

Unlike radios, moving pictures meant that people would have to leave their homes to enjoy the

³² Eighmey, Rae Katherine. *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition*. 1st ed. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 126-127

³³ Eighmey, Rae Katherine. *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition*. 1st ed. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 193-195

movies. They were becoming so popular, that by the 1930's they were surpassing theaters, plays, and dance halls as the main form of entertainment. At the time the majority of these were just silent films, but during the mid 20s the introduction of sound became quite popular with Americans and the average person would go see two or more films a week. Soda fountain owners began to realize that they can make a lot of money by introducing moving pictures into their businesses. However, only the biggest and most popular soda fountains could afford to install moving pictures. For the smaller establishments like drugstores and ice cream parlors, they would set up booths in front of movie theaters and sell their products. With the introduction of movies, soda fountains would sell movie themed ice creams and sundaes. The majority of these would be advertised in newspapers, magazines, and posters outside the establishment. These new sundaes would appeal more to dating couples, and the latest of sundaes would be large enough for two to enjoy. The most popular of these items was the "Reel" Nice Movie Sundae, in which people would pay for this 30 cent a treat without hesitation. It was a large dish with 2 or more scoops of vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry ice cream, with nuts, and crushed cherries. The movie industry was doing a lot of business with the soda fountains, and the soda business found this as a gold mine. Sundaes were part of the main stream culture during late 20s and early 30s.³⁴

Another invention added to the wide selection of entertainment in soda fountains was the jukebox. The earliest ones were player pianos, with audio speakers. Many of the types of jukeboxes were new, and expensive to obtain. However, if a soda fountain could afford one, they would be the center of the store, besides the soda jerk. Juke boxes in these establishments began

³⁴ Eighmey, Rae Katherine. *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition*. 1st ed. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 195

in the late twenties and have grown more and more in popularity since then. The height in usage of these machines was during the 40's and 50's, with the majority of them in ice cream parlors, restaurants, bars, and diners. Much radio's, music themed sundaes came around with the jukebox. In order to operate a jukebox, one first would have to pay for a sundae, or order something off the menu. Later on, the jukeboxes wherever much in free use as long as you could pay for the songs. These would become quite popular with the younger crowd, as many would enjoy their desserts, and sundaes.

The ice cream sundae had become a success for any type of person during the early 20th century. The sundae had stretched beyond social lines and became popular, with anybody. In a very brief period of time, the sundae had gone from an unknown dessert to being center stage to one of the most profound and turbulent changing moments in American history. It was a symbol of freedom, religion, luxury, suffrage, and courtship. The ice cream sundae had become the demanded dessert for the people of America. It would be at the center of the fountain scene till the soda business would fall decades later. They would be replaced with fast foods, and processed foods. But still the ice cream sundae would remain part of society, not as a delicacy, but as a novelty.

The sundae has become a symbol of the earlier days of yester year. Almost a sign of the simpler times in America, where you did not need fancy foods and every one could just enjoy a sundae. Since then the largest of soda fountains are gone; thousand of business ended and replaced with the large fast food corporations and the ice cream conglomerates. The days of class and showmanship are over and in their place are machines pumping out an endless supply of ice cream brands and flavors to the masses. However this was not the end of the sundae. The sundae

has become a novelty food. Of course the sundae just like all the other ice cream products have been placed into the new ice cream industries, many feel the best kind of sundaes are the ones made a long time ago. The old ones to many are the best. With today's advertising sundaes are seen as a weird dessert, a different processed food that you can now get at a drive through Dairy Queen. But the old timey sundae, the one that lived in the glory days of the nineteen teens and twenties is still alive.³⁵

The ice cream sundae is still around today and is forever intertwined with American society. While it is a symbol of the "good ole' days" there have been many books written and published on how to create your very own antique sundae. In fact there are guidance books and construction manuals still around that tell you how to run and operate your very own soda fountain like the old *Dispenser's Formulary Guides*. Different varieties of sundaes tell many different stories. Many of the sundaes being produced are homemade and for special occasions. To get the real feel and taste for your ice cream sundae you may have to create your own ice cream from scratch, as ice cream in the early 20th century did not have artificial flavorings as well as containing dry powdered milk.³⁶ Finally while there are really no large soda fountains left, there are several ice cream parlors in businesses around in America. There are a few antique novelty soda fountain businesses that make traditional ice cream products and sundaes as if they if they were made from right out of the book. The glory days of the soda jerks ended in the late 60s to the early 70s, but there are still services these days in which you can hire a soda jerk for parties, holidays, or other special occasions. The ice cream sundae had been the subject for

³⁵ "Ice Cream: A Brief History." YouTube. June 28, 2008. Accessed September 24, 2014.

³⁶ Quinzio, Jeri. *Of Sugar and Snow A History of Ice Cream Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 203

many historical topics that pertain to the early 20th century, and is still seen as a grand relic of the earlier days in American history.

The connection of the ice cream sundae to societal change is huge. A food like the ice cream sundae shows that we used different foods for different reasons. The ice cream sundae has impacted history in more ways than one. The sundae was part of the great rebellion against religious control against businesses. It was part of a great societal shift in which people want a luxury in and put the sundae as their go to product for such wants. It was a symbol for liberation, suffrage, and prohibition which threw the societal strife that many would turn to the sundae for, huge. It was part of an economic boom with the ever growing demand for ice cream and the ice cream sundae was up to the pack in the many ice cream businesses and soda fountains which made a huge profit it. And finally the sundae has become a novelty, a reminder of these societal changes decades ago. The ice cream sundae has made a larger impact on American history than anybody could. A product created from a dwindling business has sprung a great change in the ice cream industries. It was part of the booming age known as the roaring 20's, and for each and every American having an ice cream sundae, they had to know at that time, that life was good.

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