Old Bedford Restaurants and Places to Eat, by: Brian Oulighan.

Just for the fun of it, we are going to look at all the dining establishments in Bedford over the years. Let's see how many you can remember. I have been to many of these places, but most of them were there before I was born.

The first place we are going to visit is the Bedford Inn at 30 North Road. This was the Jonas Monroe home. In 1955 Ruth Wylie was running the Inn, but by 1957, Shirley and Francis Davis were running it. In 1970, I remember a couple named Merry and Stan in charge, but it was torn down soon after this. Rufus Porter murals were on the walls in at least two dining rooms.

You would have found a tearoom at 5 Concord Road in the early 1900's until Herman Schofield took over. He was famous for excellent home-cooked meals. It was called Red Barn Luncheon-Dinner Spot.

The next place is Murphy's Coffee Pot. This is on North Road where Zwicker's is now. It was an old-fashioned diner with the long counter with stools and about 5 wooden booths. It was there until the late 60's. It had a very large coffee pot for the sign out front and was also a “filling station.”

It is time for lunch now and we are going for seafood at Sailor Bill's, (1955) at 428 North Road, at the intersection of Chelmsford Road (where we find the Renzo Salon today). My parents loved this place not only for the seafood, but also because it had the closest phone booth to our house before we had one put in. Prior to Sailor Bills, in 1946 there was a place called the Bedford Inn at this location run by Mary Wilson. They served fried clams and ice cream. Another great place to eat was close by, Bedford Springs Hotel, but it ceased operation around 1917.

Back to Bedford Center, down Main St. at the corner of Elm St. was the Bedford House Hotel. I understand that the food was very good, “The house now furnishes the comforts of a first-class suburban hotel” (A.E. Brown, 1888). Another fine dining establishment was the Domine Manse at 110 Great Road. Kenneth P.Blake ran the restaurant in the 50's and 60's after several owners. “The traveler of today, drinks at the “domine well”, and receives a cordial welcome at this house, as have the hundreds who have gone before him across the same threshold” (A.E. Brown, ca.1891). Across the street was the Mary Alaine Restaurant and Bakery in the 50's, becoming S & S Restaurant later.

Traveling down the Great Road, in the Bedford Shopping Center you would find Center Haven on the left. It was there through most of the 70's and early 80's. Prior to that, it was called 3D Restaurant. Mary Ellen Bakery was next door. Leaving the Bedford Shopping Center and turning left on the Great Road, we come to Webber Avenue on the right. It was here that we have one of my favorite names of all time for a restaurant, “Swanky's Rollin' Lunch.” Arthur Luedtke was listed as the owner in 1946. I am not sure if it was an actual “Rolling” lunch. If it were, it would have been the first “canteen truck” that I ever heard of.

Continuing down Great Road on the right you would find a diner where the vacant Travel Lodge now sits and across the street where Dunkin Donuts is now was The Bedford Diner, a classic silver dining car restaurant. Next door, where Papa Gino's now stands was Carroll's Restaurant.
It had several names before Carroll's, including the Family Kettle. Across the street was Miles Dairy and Sandwich Bar at 297-299 Great Road in 1958, although I'm not sure of the exact location. In the Great Road Shopping Center was Royal Lunch where Sparta is, and to the left of F.W. Woolworths, which had a sandwich bar and soda fountain, was Pacific Island.

Back on the Great Road, turn right and you would see a small airplane on the roof of a building. This was Polly's Restaurant. I have heard that the plane did not survive the hurricane of 1938. The owners were John and Alexandra Polesayka. Polly's later became Navoy Restaurant. This place had a large lobster tank that looked like a ten-foot wide swimming pool, where you could pick your own lobster to take home. Eventually, the building was replaced by a hotel, first called the Arrowhead and then the Lord Bedford with the Jolly Porpoise Restaurant, before becoming the Best Western and finally the Bedford Plaza.

Further down Great Road to the right side of the American Legion was Howard's Delicatessen, Mike's - Fine Foods - Home Cooking (1960), Bedford Seafood (1970) and Cumberland Farms. In 1935 right at the corner of Pine and Main you would see Cora's Lunch, also known as the YD Restaurant. Before it was a restaurant, it was YD Poultry Farm in 1927, owned by the Iasi family. In 1939, Anthony and Angelo Iasi divided the business, one taking the Chicken Land Farm, while the other focused on operating the YD. YD stood for “Yankee Division,” the nickname for the 26th Infantry division, based in Massachusetts. In the 60's, that building housed the Toy Sun Chinese restaurant which became Lee's Garden for a while in the 70's.

There were many other places to go in Bedford for a great dinner. We could drive over to the Bedford Country Club on Old Billerica Road or the Skyview Restaurant on Hartwell Road overlooking the Airport.

For lunch, we could go to Loomis Street. There was a spot on the corner across from the train depot. Before 1931, Charles Persall owned this place, Paul Malaguti after that, then Bernhard Larsen in 1953 and Oliviero Madrioli after that. Over the following years, the place had several more proprietors; William Purdy in 1964, Roy Rudolph in 1969, Dominic Raffaelo in 1972, Arthur Savignac in 1975, and by 1980 it was just called the Corner Store (I'm not sure who ran it then). Now, we know it as Pizza Express at 65 Loomis Street.

Back in Bedford Center in 1980, you could visit Cozy Corner, which moved to 68 Great Road some time in the '70s and was known for great subs and pizza. Ye Old Country Store on Fletcher Road also had great lunches as well as a bakery.

What have I missed? Let's hear from you about your favorites! Send us a letter or email, or continue the conversation on our Facebook page (we love any photos of Bedford so feel free to post your own!).

We thank Brian Oulighan for this wonderful article.