

## MIRROR

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Through  
THE  
Looking  
Glass

Old timers who mourn the passing of things that were dear to earlier generations should never overlook the boarding houses we used to have in New Bern.

Scattered around town were these pleasantly informal eating places, where quality and quantity blended into meals that took no account of calories. You stuffed to heart's content, and shared the latest gossip with every bite you ate.

No one ever knew in advance what was to be served on any given day, but nobody cared. There was bound to be a wide variety, and those who had arms long enough to qualify for the famed "boarding house reach" got plenty of it all.

In many respects a boarding house was just like a family gathering. Table manners didn't worry the regulars, and second helpings were the order of the day. There was good natured banter over the food consumption of this or that diner, but it was like the pot calling the kettle black. Everybody was a hog over the vittles, except the temporarily ailing who were "off their feed" for the time being.

Invariably, the energetic lady who operated the boarding house was a cheerful and loquacious soul. She loved people, and darted in and out of the kitchen to exchange conversation with the folks who entrusted their digestions to her care.

Perhaps memory is playing tricks on us, but for the life of us we can't remember anybody at the long, bountifully-laden table ever getting sure enough mad during the hectic discussions that accompanied the meals. It's hard to become successfully infuriated, when you're cramming food like a late arrival at a church picnic.

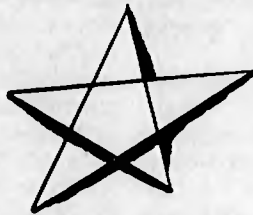
Surprisingly, you didn't hear much about stomach ulcers either. Maybe the unhappy mortals who were plagued by ulcers simply stayed away from boarding houses—or should have stayed away earlier. At any rate, it was quite clear that no one among those present was suffering at the moment from the inadequacies and disturbances of a squeamish stomach.

Today, at noon, most of us describe our meal as lunch, but it was always called dinner in the old days. To call this enormous intake of food a lunch would have been a disgraceful misrepresentation of the facts.

First come, first served was the pattern, and the boarders who got a head start were privileged to latch into the best pieces of meat on the platter. Actually, this was their only advantage, since the avalanche of assorted vegetables that rounded out the feast was never depleted. Much remained after the last of the thundering herd had departed.

Eating first, and leaving, wasn't entirely advisable. You knew full well that the moment you were gone you would become the topic of conversation. Your

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**ONCE UPON A TIME**—This impressive brick structure, supplanted by the building that Coleman Motors, successor to W. C. Hagood's, has occupied many years, is best remembered by oldesters as the residence of Dr. Frank Hughes and his family. Before that, as told to us, the original Bank of New Bern was located in it. The shadowed building to your left, now occupied by Gussman Cleaners, is where Dr. Hughes had his office, and Lawyer Bill McKeever, if our information is correct, did business on the floor above the good doctor's office.

The vacant lot in the foreground, across the street, (Hammond Electric now) was big enough to play baseball in. The Downtown and the Uptown boys had their games there, and they always ended in a fight. A huge magnolia tree could be climbed, if the going got too tough. It was even fun scrambling up, during the peace that reigned in between ball games. Deny it if you care to, but you've got to be pushing 70, or probably older, if you recall all this.—Photo from Albert D. Brooks Collection.

