

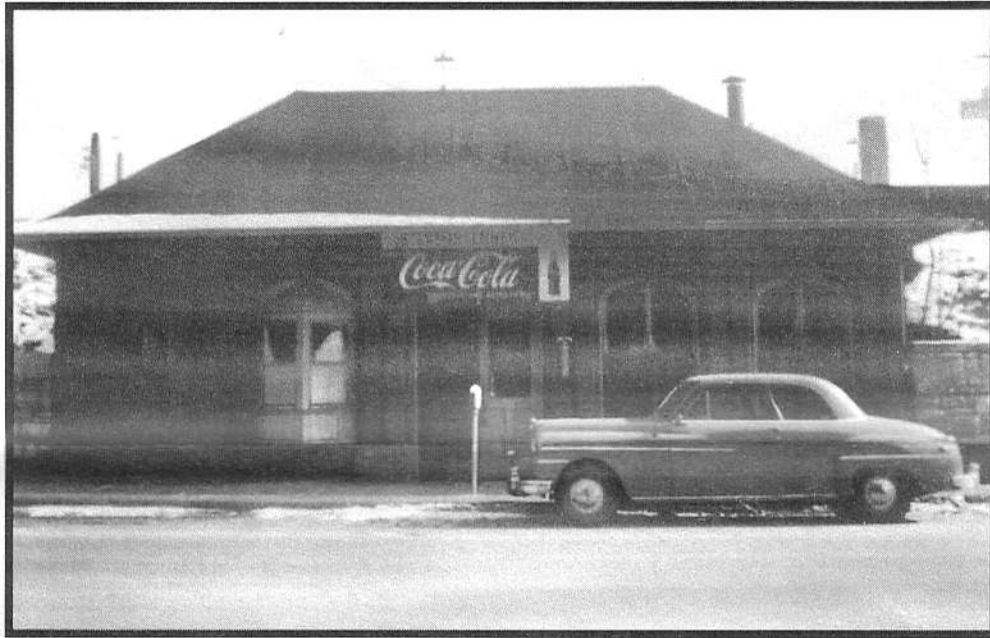
Hyde Park History

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Steve's Lunch



From the late 1940s to 1965 HPHS headquarters was the Steven's Lunch diner.

As told to Alta Blakely by Steve's grandson, Greg Thorson

In about 1948 or '49 Steve Megales, my grandpa, acquired the business at 5529 South Lake Park; that is, he owned the furnishings but never the building, which we think remained the property of the Illinois Central Railroad.

Although he was Greek, he served more traditional American bacon and eggs and pancakes for breakfast, franks and hamburgers at lunchtime.

From his third-floor walk-up apartment at 1535 East 55th Street, near Cornell Avenue, under the I.C. tracks and around the corner from the cafe, he and his wife Rose would come to open the restaurant at 4:30 in the morning, serving breakfast, then lunch, and closing at about three in the afternoon. Sometimes he would stay to prepare food for the following day,

especially a beef stew or a pot roast or a ham. Standing all day was hard on his feet.

Tables for customers were small. There were perhaps four, each used for two or three people, to the right of the double doors as they entered, perhaps one or two tables to the left.

The counter was in the middle of the room, running about half or two-thirds the length of the building, starting from the south end. Then, just north of it, was the cash register, where Steve's second wife, Rose, presided. (She also had an interest in fortune-telling.) Steve did the cooking behind the counter, along the east wall, next to the railroad tracks, where there was a stovepipe and a chimney for the oven and grill.

In the small north room Steve kept supplies, money, and perhaps a small bed. A washroom continued on page 2 ►

