Barbecue in Western Kentucky: An Ethnographic Study

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BARBECUE IN WESTERN KENTUCKY:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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The Programs in Folk Studies
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By
John Marshall
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BARBECUE IN WESTERN KENTUCKY:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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After briefly placing barbecue cookery in its proper historical perspective as a traditional method of food preparation, this study describes from an ethnographic viewpoint the methodologies and attitudes of two traditional barbecue cooks, Rev. E. J. Jones of Columbus, Kentucky, and Woody Smith of Arlington, Kentucky, the commercial establishments in which they cook and the role of this form of folk cookery in the area in which these men are located. This material is then utilized to draw conclusions based on the changes which have occurred in the form, process and function of barbecue in the transition from the traditional to the commercial and to indicate the effects these changes might have on the foodways of Western Kentuckians.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Folk cookery, that is cookery whose characteristics include oral or imitative transmission, tradition and regional variation, is an important component in the whole of a folk culture. An analysis of a culture's traditional methods of food preparation and the philosophies behind those methods will naturally embrace many facets of the nature of the culture itself.

Barbecue cookery is the process of cooking meat over glowing coals which remain after pieces of wood have been burned. A spicy sauce which is applied to the meat either before, during, or after the meat is cooked is an integral part of this form of folk cookery. Barbecue cookery is learned through oral tradition, example, and imitation. It is practiced according to certain principles of methodology and philosophy handed down from generation to generation. These principles vary according to family, community, region and culture.

The purpose of this thesis is to describe from an ethnographic perspective two traditional barbecue cooks, the commercial establishments in which they cook, and the role of this traditional form of folk cookery in the area in which these men are located. After briefly placing barbecue cookery in its proper historical perspective as
a traditional method of food preparation in chapter one
this study deals exclusively with describing barbecue
cookery methodologies as practiced by these two men, the
current manifestations of these methodologies as employed
in their commercial establishments, and the attitudes of
the cooks and their customers toward barbecue.

Mr. Woody Smith has been barbecuing in the Hickman
County-Carlisle County, Kentucky area for over forty years.
He was born in Tennessee, but moved with his family into
Hickman County when he was a small child. After moving
to Hickman County, Mr. Smith's father learned to barbecue
from an older man in the Hickman County district. Woody
Smith, who learned how to cook in the traditional manner
from his father, has barbecued both on outdoor pits and in
commercial establishments. He is now employed as the only
cook at Rust's Barbecue in Arlington, Carlisle County,
Kentucky.

Reverend E. J. Jones moved to Hickman County from
central Kentucky in 1937. He learned to barbecue by watching
and talking with a neighbor who had the only barbecue pit
in Columbus, Hickman County, at that time. He began barbe-
cuing for outdoor functions and increased his knowledge
of barbecue cookery by observation of other cooks and by
trial and error. Rev. Jones has been barbecuing in the
Hickman-Carlisle County area for over thirty-five years.
He is now employed as the only cook at Jones Pit Bar-B-Q
in Columbus, Kentucky, and has been there for over twenty
years.
I chose to study the cooking methods, philosophies and commercial establishments of these two men for several reasons. They are highly regarded in the Jackson Purchase, the name assigned to those eight counties in the far west of Kentucky, for their culinary skill and are, to some extent, a source of local pride. They are both traditional barbecue cooks, and their establishments reflect the Purchase area's concepts of what barbecue cookery is all about. Finally, the product that is served in their restaurants far surpasses that of any other barbecue establishment I have visited. This is purely a matter of personal preference and taste, but it is based on years of experience as a barbecue fancier and a determined spirit of adventure where barbecue establishments are concerned.

Most of the material for this ethnography came from many hours spent in conversation with and observance of the two subjects during 1977 and 1978. I tape recorded several hours of formal interviews with each man, and I conversed informally with each on several occasions. I spoke to customers, family members, establishment owners and other members of the community regarding their attitudes toward barbecue and to the products served by Mr. Smith and Rev. Jones in particular.

In order to gain a broader perspective, I visited many other barbecue establishments and outdoor barbecue functions where I questioned and conversed with both consumers and as many traditional barbecue cooks as I could find. I photographed various methods of cooking and the
cooking pits and pit arrangements wherever possible. I discussed the barbecue techniques of Mr. Smith and Rev. Jones with two other traditional cooks who are familiar with their work.

Because barbecue cookery has roots that stretch deeply into mankind's past, and because barbecue cookery survives today in traditional and regional variations, this ethnographic study of barbecue cookery as a form of folk cookery should prove an important addition to the increasing number of ethnographic works which portray food as an important cultural indicator.
There is some dispute as to the origin of the term "barbecue." Some writers believe that the word comes from the Caribbean. One writer says it comes from the Arawak Indians there, while another maintains that the word originated with the Carib Indians in the Caribbean. Yet, another writer states that the Spanish conquistadores adopted both the word and the method of cooking from the Mayas in Central America in the sixteenth century. Others who have investigated the subject maintain that the word barbecue comes from the French term barbe à queue, which means "beard to tail." This, they believe, refers to the method of splitting, or spitting, the animal before roasting. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Caribbean, the Spanish borrowed the term for a framework of sticks built over an open fire on which the

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Native Americans roasted their meat. This framework of sticks was called a barbacoa. When the English in the New World began using this word to describe this method roasting meat over a fire, it entered the language as barbecue.5

The methods by which barbecue cooking moved onto the North American Continent have been discussed and debated by various gastronomic writers. One states that cooking meat over hot coals or stones which were placed in a hole in the ground was an "ancient method" employed by Indians from "New England to Chile."6 Another writer believes that the Spanish colonizers brought the method of cooking from Central and South America to Florida in the east and California in the west.7 Yet another writer feels that the early European settlers in America learned this method from the Native Americans.8

Few writers recognize that roasting meat over glowing coals has been a part of the culinary traditions of mankind for over eighty thousand years.

When these European settlers in the New World rediscovered the method of cooking over glowing coals, they were unconsciously reaffirming their links with the past.

5Tannahill, p. 287.
7Watson, p. 28.
8Tannahill, p. 265.
Although they were not aware of it, they were practicing a traditional method of food preparation that had its origins in their own primordial predecessors. The fact that they were shown the way to their past by the "primitive" inhabitants of a land which seemed to have an abundance of natural resources reminds us of the seemingly cyclical nature of man's existence and of the important lessons to be learned by a close scrutiny and appreciation of one's cultural heritage and traditional links with the past.

Wherever and however barbecue cookery occurred, this traditional method of food preparation became primarily associated with feasts and celebrations honoring an occasion or a person. During the seventeenth century in Virginia, there is evidence of the popularity of barbecues as social occasions. According to two sources, large fish, perhaps sturgeon, were barbecued as part of a popularly accepted form of entertainment.

The barbecue, and its attendant social accoutrements, was also popular outside of Virginia. In New York City during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one method of entertaining was to barbecue turtles. These animals were brought live from the West Indies for the occasion.

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9 Ibid., p. 25.


11 Ibid.
In the southern section of the United States, the barbecue has traditionally been associated with festive occasions, particularly political gatherings, and among Blacks. It is likely that the Blacks who were brought to this country carried with them some knowledge of this method of food preparation. The barbecue became more than a way of preparing food for slaves in the ante-bellum South. It was a social event which represented not only a variation in the usual, monotonous food supply distributed by the master, but it meant a time to gather with other slaves and be entertained or relax. Some slaveholders joined together to hold barbecues for their slaves. These masters were conscious of what the other slaves thought of the food their slaves were able to obtain. They were aware that their servants compared notes on the status of food in their respective households.

Often some form of recreation or entertainment was offered to coincide with the barbecue. This sometimes took the form of a dance, and on some plantations there was a barbecue and a dance once a week. On other plantations,


the barbecue was an annual event, usually held in the summer, which allowed slaves from the surrounding area their only chance to get together on a fairly informal, yet condoned, basis.  

While the barbecue was probably used as a form of social control which allowed the slaves a sumptuous feast and a period of social interaction to look forward to and enjoy, it also played a significant role in social activities for the white population in the South. When Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were married in Kentucky in 1806, their marriage vows were celebrated with, among other things, barbecued mutton.  

By 1833, barbecue was already recognized as a regional specialty. A young North Carolina bride wrote home to her parents in New York during that year and referred to "the famous barbarque [sic] of the South."  

During the nineteenth century, the barbecue became closely associated with political gatherings, and, to a certain extent, in the South this remains true today. Politicians were quick to discover that providing large amounts of barbecue meat, and often liquor, would help


17 Sam Bowers Hilliard, as cited in Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860 (Carbondale, Southern Illinois Press, 1972), p. 44.
them obtain votes. The barbecue method of cooking lends itself to these activities not only because it is a convenient method of cooking for large numbers of people, but also because of its traditional links to the past and to the frontier life, real or imagined, that "made this country what it is today."

One of the most notorious of the political barbecues occurred outside the South during the presidential election of 1840. William Henry Harrison, while campaigning in Zanesville, Ohio, gave a barbecue for the electorate, who proceeded to consume eighteen tons of meat, including venison, and large quantities of pies and hard cider. 18

However it is in the South, and particularly in Kentucky, that the political barbecue first prospered, grew into tradition, and where it remains today on a small, but significant, scale. The citizens of Scott County, Kentucky, honored the Marquis de Lafayette with a barbecue in 1825. Calhoun and Webster, when visiting Kentucky during the political campaigns of the 1830's were "intrigued" by the barbecues. In 1842, two years prior to the actual election, Henry Clay began his last campaign for the presidency by holding a large barbecue in Frankfort, Kentucky. 19

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Kentucky, as well as in other parts of the South, the barbecue became the name not only for a method of food preparation

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18 Brown, p. 111.

ation, but also for the food to be consumed and the festive occasion during which the food was prepared, served and eaten. Although the meat barbecued at these functions varies from region to region, the most popular animal for barbecuing throughout the South has always been the hog. Mutton was once a popular meat, but the sheep populations in the South have declined to such an extent as to make mutton a rarity in all but the most devoted areas, such as Western Kentucky and the Mexican border areas of Texas. Some Westerners prefer the taste of barbecued beef, while barbecued goat is a cherished item in parts of the South and Texas. It must be remembered that any species of animal can be, and probably has been, barbecued.

The barbecue method of preparing meat for consumption requires several helpers, but only one chef. In the South Black people have dominated as barbecue cooks, probably stemming from the ante-bellum period, but white cooks are certainly not unknown. Because this method of cooking has traditionally been more or less a public one, the person who cooks the meat is held responsible for the finished product. The barbecue chefs have to take care with their product to ensure their continued popularity as cooks. By building a reputation for cooking "good barbecue" these chefs assure themselves of at least several jobs a year. More importantly, they establish themselves in their communities and areas. As Dale Brown says, speaking in the early 1970's:

Every country community in the South has a Master Barbecuer, who is as greatly respected as the square-dance caller or the water diviner. . . . The barbecuer always has his own secret sauce and
his own way of carrying out the ritual.\textsuperscript{20}

This could just as well have been written one hundred or one hundred and fifty years ago, and it was as true then as it is today among the few practitioners of this traditional method of food preparation.

The appearance of restaurants in rural areas in the South and West during the early part of the twentieth century served to mirror and exploit regional foodways. Because a barbecue chef had an established reputation in his particular area, and because he was allowed to take his product to the people only a few times a year when political rallies or other festive occasions were held, it was only natural that "barbecue stands" would eventually dot the Southern landscape. In the 1920's these commercial establishments began to appear on highways of one description or another throughout the South.\textsuperscript{21} Even though this traditional and regional specialty had been commercialized, the barbecued product was still seen as part of a special occasion. There were not many citizens in rural areas of the South who could afford to "eat out" with any regularity.

With the appearance of nationally-controlled chains of restaurants in the 1960's, regional tastes became less important than cash flow and expediency. The idea seems to be to exploit the human tendency to seek the quick meal, the immediate fulfillment of the desire for food, at the expense

\textsuperscript{20}Brown, p. 120.

of the regional tradition. The marketing managers and the hired psychologists have, to a certain extent, succeeded in altering the foodways of regional populations. One consequence of this alteration appears to be a reduction in the number of local barbecue restaurants. The few remaining "barbecue stands" in the South today which are still concerned with maintaining the regional culinary traditions in their particular area are fighting what seems to me to be a losing, rear-guard action against conglomerates intent on forcing "American," or some stylized "ethnic," food down the throats of regional identities.
CHAPTER III
AREA STUDIED

Hickman County, the present home of Woody Smith and Rev. E. J. Jones, is one of eight counties in the Jackson Purchase, an area so named because Andrew Jackson was instrumental in obtaining the land from the Chickasaw Indians in 1819. This land comprised the westernmost portions of Kentucky and Tennessee, and the purchase from the Indians permitted white settlement in the area for the first time. Because the section of the Jackson Purchase in Kentucky was separated from the remainder of Kentucky by the Tennessee River, from what is now Illinois by the Ohio River and from what is now Missouri by the Mississippi River, the settlers of the Jackson Purchase in Kentucky developed ideas and cultural associations much akin to those in adjacent Tennessee. Of course, the settlers who moved into the Purchase area during the 1920s and 1930s came largely from Kentucky's older farming regions, from Virginia, Tennessee, or the Carolinas. They were generally second or third generation Americans who were moving westward to take up new land because of land fatigue and overcrowded farming conditions at home. Unlike other parts of Kentucky, the Jackson Purchase is generally considered to be part of the Deep South.¹

The people of the Purchase raised cotton and other crops and used slaves to help them harvest these crops and to tend to their livestock. The attitudes of people in the Purchase were such that when it was ascertained that Kentucky was not going to secede from the Union, a meeting was held in 1861 in Graves County which was attended by many of the leading citizens from the Purchase. Those in attendance at this meeting recommended that the Jackson Purchase secede from the Commonwealth of Kentucky and join the Confederacy.² The sudden movement of Union forces into the area halted overt secessionist talk in the Purchase; however, most of the men from the region who fought during the Civil War lined up on the side of the Confederacy.³

Hickman County was formed in 1821 and at that time was the name given to the entire Purchase area. The first permanent settlement in Hickman County was probably begun as early as 1818,⁴ and by 1822 there were approximately four hundred slaves.⁵ Other counties of the Purchase were partitioned from Hickman County until 1845 when it achieved its present geographical form.

⁴Battle, II: 62.
⁵Don Simmons, Tax Lists of Jackson Purchase, 1822, 1823, 1924 (Mimeographed, 1974), p. 15.
Today, Hickman County's boundaries are formed by Carlisle County to the north, by Graves County to the east, by the state of Tennessee and Fulton County, Kentucky, to the south, and by the Mississippi River to the west. The county's landform consists of a thick loess soil belt running from the east through a rather level plateau to a series of steep cliffs, 200 feet high, which border the flood plain leading to the Mississippi River on the west. The land area of the county is 226 square miles.

The first district settled was at Columbus, on the Mississippi River. Although the first permanent settlement was not until approximately 1818, there were prior, and simultaneous, temporary occupancies and one grand plan by the Virginia Legislature which included developing on the site a large town which would one day be the commercial center of the United States. Columbus did become an important stop for steamboats plying the Mississippi River between St. Louis and Memphis, and it was the chief supply center for a large portion of the Purchase area.

Other areas of Hickman County which were occupied from the beginnings of settlement in the Jackson Purchase were at Moscow, the Rock Springs area, Oakland and Clinton, which later became the county seat because of its location near the geographical center of the county.

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6 Karan, pp. 8, 111.
7 Battle, II: 62.
8 Ibid., II: 62, 71.
9 Ibid., II: 63, 71.
As has already been noted, the settlers into Hickman County brought slaves with them. Columbus had more slaves than white people in 1830.\textsuperscript{10} By 1845, Hickman County was the largest slave holding area in the Jackson Purchase.\textsuperscript{11} In 1848, there were more slaves in Hickman County than there were white voters.\textsuperscript{12}

The primary reason for the large requirement of slave labor in Hickman County was agricultural. In the early days of its existence, the County was the predominant cotton producer in the commonwealth. In fact, as late as the 1920s Hickman County was still one of the leading cotton producing areas in the state. The county was also noted for its production of hogs, for the raising of sheep for wool and meat, and for production of fat lambs. The decline in sheep production elsewhere in Kentucky was not apparent in Hickman County until after 1930.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Danny Hatcher, The Jackson Purchase, Hickman County, Kentucky, 1930 Census, Series 1, No. 3 (Mimeographed, 1969), p. 15.}


\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Kentucky, Senate Reports, Committee on Finance (Legislative Document No. 10, 1849), p. 172.}

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Associated Industries of Kentucky, Inc., Kentucky Opportunities Department, Kentucky Resources, Attractions, Opportunities: Series Covering All Counties (Louisville, 1929), Alphabetical Listing for Hickman County. Counties in alphabetical order.}
The slaves that labored in the fields of Hickman County may have been treated to the inevitable barbecue once or twice a year. Hilliard points out that while pork appeared to be the favorite food among the Southern Blacks, sheep were quite numerous in Kentucky and Tennessee especially. In discussing the use of beef and mutton among Southern planters, Hilliard notes:

Beef and mutton seldom were relied on as steady meat sources for slaves but usually were reserved for special occasions such as holidays and weddings. Apparently a common practice was to celebrate notable occasions with a barbecue. Some planters had annual affairs towards the end of the season where pigs, lambs and goats were roasted over coals. Such occasions were the delight of the participants, of course, and were important interruptions in the slave's routine, yet they were relatively infrequent and short-lived.14

The continuation of the traditional barbecue to celebrate special occasions among the Black citizens of the district after their emancipation was a very natural act, especially in view of the ready availability of pigs, sheep and the "right" kind of wood in Hickman County. One of the most important requirements for a barbecue other than meat, is a hard wood that burns slowly, preferably one that might give an added flavor to the meat. The tree that has traditionally been associated with barbecuing is the hickory, a tree that has grown in abundance in Hickman County since before the coming of the white man.15

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15 Battle, II: 62.
Today Hickman County is still primarily an agricultural area, although cotton and sheep have all but disappeared from the local farming scene. The principal crops now are soybeans and wheat, while cattle and hogs dominate the livestock markets. This county is fairly prosperous agriculturally, being above the state average in the market value of all agricultural products sold.\textsuperscript{16}

Most of the citizens of Hickman County were born in the area rather than migrating into the county from other states. The county also has one of the highest proportions of Black residents in the state, although the percentage of population is nowhere near that of the antebellum period. Many of the residents of Hickman County remain in farming on a part-time basis only. Some work at the few local industrial plants, but more commute to Wickliffe, Paducah, Mayfield and Fulton to earn the major portions of their income.\textsuperscript{17}

Hickman County is no longer an important center in the Jackson Purchase. The population in 1879 was 8,453,\textsuperscript{18} and by 1920 it has reached 10,244.\textsuperscript{19} However, the 1970 census indicated a drop in population to 6,264. Columbus now has a population of only 371, while the county seat,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Karan, pp. 124, 130, 132, 137, 143.
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Ibid., pp. 23, 28, 149.
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Battle, II: 70.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Associated Industries of Kentucky, Inc., Alphabetical listing under Hickman County.
\end{itemize}
Clinton, supports only 1,618 people. The hamlets of Moscow and Oakton are no longer recognizable as the towns they once were.

At the present time there are two commercial barbecue establishments in Hickman County. One is operated by Rev. E. J. Jones, a subject of this study, in Columbus, and the other is called Nicky's and is located on Highway 51 between Arlington and Clinton. Until 1975, Nicky's was operated by Woody Smith, the other subject of this study, who has cooked commercially in Hickman County for over twenty-five years and who now cooks at Rust's Barbecue in Arlington, Carlisle County, just over a mile from the Hickman County line.

There are only two annual public outdoor barbecue events in Hickman County. One is held in July at St. Dennis Catholic Church, near Beulah, and the other is held in Columbus every August and is known as the Columbus Homecoming. These are the only remaining links with a very strong barbecue tradition in Hickman County. Until the 1940s court days, church suppers, political gatherings, dances, social at Vaughan's Grove and organizational functions such as the Rural Electric Co-op Picnics were celebrated with a traditional-style barbecue. Currently, however, a person wanting barbecue in the vicinity of Hickman County

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20Kentucky Department of Transportation, Office of Transportation Planning, Division of Facilities Planning, General Highway Map, Hickman County, Kentucky (Last revision, 1977).
will have to visit Rev. Jones, Nicky's or make the one mile journey across the border to Rust's in Arlington.
CHAPTER IV
ETHNOGRAPHY: REVEREND E. J. "PREACHER" JONES

Introduction

Reverend E. J. "Preacher" Jones of Columbus, Hickman County, is an African Methodist Episcopal clergyman and a part-time barbecue cook. (See Figure 1.) He was born in Nelson County, Kentucky, on February 19, 1903, but spent most of his early life in Spencer County, Kentucky.1 The first time Rev. Jones witnessed meat being prepared "barbecue style" was at a revival in Southern Indiana during the early 1920s. Although he was very interested in that method of food preparation, it was not until 1937, when he took up a position with the church at Columbus, that he became reaquainted with barbecue cookery. This fact is especially interesting in light of the places Rev. Jones lived during those approximately fifteen years. His first charge with a church was at Franklin, Kentucky, where he preached for three and a half years. He then returned to Spencer County where he began driving milk trucks from Paintsville and Simpsonville to Louisville. He worked as a truck driver "for some time" before taking up a position in a private home in Shelbyville, Kentucky, as cook for Mr. D. T. Long. Then, in 1937, the church Conference directed

1Unless otherwise stated, all information in this chapter is taken from taped interviews with Rev. E. J. Jones, Columbus, Hickman County, Kentucky, 23 June 1978 and 20 September 1978.
Rev. Jones to take up a position in Western Kentucky and he moved to Columbus.

. . . and then I came here, I never did see nobody barbecue . . . we would roast, take our meat and put it in the oven and cook it and call it 'done meat,' and eat it. We didn't know what barbecue was until I came down here in 1937. The first meat I saw really barbecued was down here on the river.

When Rev. Jones first went to Columbus to live, his latent interest in food preparation was whetted by his observation of, and participation in, a barbecue near the banks of the Mississippi River at Columbus. The method that was employed remains solidly in his memory. The meat was cooked over an open pit, approximately fifty feet long, three-and-a-half to four feet wide and twelve to fifteen inches deep. The wood used to cook the meat was burned in an area separate from the cooking pit. Hot coals from this fire were spread around the bottom of the pit under the meat. There was a screen over the top of the pit attached to common American chicken wire. This was to prevent the meat from falling through into the fire. The meat was not cut into pieces but was still intact on the carcass. There were a number of carcasses cooking over the hot coals on the wire and screens. Each of the carcasses was skewered with two sticks, sharpened at both ends.

Well I saw one or two types of turning. They had something . . . sticks, sharpened at both ends, long sticks that would accommodate the carcass of meat, sharp at both ends and they would take it and stick it through the carcass. Start at the front, or back, and work it through so it wouldn't come aloose, and stick it through every piece of the
The meat was cooked in this manner for a number of hours. It was started late in the afternoon, cooked all night and ready the next morning. The cooks for Rev. Jones' first "real" barbecue experience were from Union City, Tennessee, and the occasion was the Annual Homecoming, the famous Columbus August 15th Celebration to mark the emancipation of the slaves.

Once Rev. Jones' interest in barbecue was rekindled, he became intent on becoming a good barbecue cook. He learned to barbecue by being a good observer and by experimentation. A neighbor named Mose Rawsell had a restaurant where some barbecue and a lot of fish were cooked. Rev. Jones learned about barbecue from watching Mose Rawsell, among others. Mose Rawsell had what Rev. Jones calls a temporary pit. In that type of pit he could cook six shoulders of pork and two sheep, but if he tried to cook any more than that, Mose Rawsell "got too excited and didn't do such a good job."

The first time Rev. Jones tried barbecuing meat, he cooked two shoulders which, he says, were about two thirds done. To his surprise, people "bought up every bit." His next attempt at cooking was for a political candidate, Harry Jack Roberts of Clinton, Kentucky, who supplied the
sheep for Rev. Jones to barbecue. Instead of barbecuing
the sheep, he boiled it in a kettle in his back yard, took
it out of the kettle and put it on a pit and called it bar-
becued meat. Rev. Jones claims that "people went wild about
it" probably because it was "giveaway meat." He boiled
the meat because it took too long to barbecue. Since that
time Rev. Jones has not boiled meat and sold it as barbecue.
"People began to watch then, you know. They didn't want no
boiled meat, you see, they could boil meat at home."

Rev. Jones started his own barbecue pit in the
early 1940s in Columbus near the site of his current bar-
becue establishment. The store had a dirt floor and was
heated by a three burner coal oil stove. When the store
burned down during the 1940s, Rev. Jones had recently stocked
it with merchandise such as candy and peanuts, so the fire
was quite a financial loss for him at the time. He perser-
vered, however, and continued improving his barbecue cookery
techniques.

I could get it done, but I could never get it tender.
You had to pull it, something like chewing gum. I
was afraid I would overcook it. It has a pretty
good taste, it just wasn't cooked enough. I got
some criticism -- meat tastes good but it's hard
to get off the bone. So I kept cooking and watching
watching as much as I could. I watched different
cooks. . . . I asked questions. . . . I kept on
until I learned by taste. Well it suits me, I
think it will suit somebody else.

While he was establishing himself as a barbecue cook
in the area, Rev. Jones was also busy learning about barbe-
cue cookery. He said he has "been learning to cook for
thirty years." He had many failures, particularly when
cooking over open pits, and he stated that he does not "understand how people tolerated my early cooking." However, as Rev. Jones said, "A smart cook learns each time he cooks," and he has persevered and today has the reputation of being "one of the better cooks." Concerning his standing and his attitudes relating to barbecue cooking today, Rev. Jones said, "I'm not ashamed to take my shovel and my helper to go with any group of cooks, because we know what we're doing when we go to a place to cook."

The sign that a barbecue cook has "arrived" in the Purchase community of Western Kentucky is that he is invited to cook at one or more of the various outdoor gatherings held annually. Not only has Rev. Jones cooked at the old time political gatherings of the past, but he has been an integral part of the picnics the area Catholic churches hold each year at the St. James Church in La Center, at the St. Dennis Church in Beulah, at the Fancy Farm Picnic, for the Arlington Chamber of Commerce and at the St. Charles Church near Kirbyton. Usually Rev. Jones cooks alone, or with one helper, at these outdoor gatherings. However, the size of the Fancy Farm Picnic is such that four additional cooks are employed. Each cook takes a helper, and the helper is paid out of the cook's wages. It was a dispute over money that led to Rev. Jones and the managers of the Fancy Farm Picnic going their separate ways.

Rev. Jones left Fancy Farm because they would not give him sufficient monetary compensation. His helper demanded more money so Rev. Jones asked the hierarchy at
Fancy Farm for a raise in wages. When they refused his request he quit. Rev. Jones believes that he should make a higher wage than his helper because if something goes wrong, Rev. Jones, not the helper, would be held responsible. The other interpretation of the dispute between Rev. Jones and the Fancy Farm Picnic Committee comes from Sam Gray, the person in charge of the cooks at Fancy Farm. Gray stated that he, not Rev. Jones, made the decision to terminate the relationship between Rev. Jones and the Fancy Farm Picnic. He let Rev. Jones "go" because Rev. Jones was "too slow."\(^2\) This slowness is one aspect of his cooking of which Rev. Jones seems proud. "The longer the meat is cooked, the better it is. I'm one of the slowest cooks, I guess, in the country." He believes that his slow method of cooking is what has achieved his good reputation for him, and he would not consider compromising his principles. In fact it is Rev. Jones' remarkable patience and his unyielding attitude toward this traditional method of cooking that first led me to seek permission to write an ethnographic study of his establishment and to evaluate and describe his cooking methodology.

**Description**

"When I light the fire, I thank the Lord for it."

It is not hard to find Rev. Jones' Bar-B-Q Pit once

\(^2\)Interview with Sam Gray, Mayfield, Graves County, Kentucky. 28 July 1978.
you are near Columbus on either a Friday afternoon or early Saturday Morning. As you come off a slight rise on your way into Columbus from the north or northeast, Highways 80 or 123, you can see vast quantities of smoke rising from out of the trees on your right. Turn on either of the roads on the right and you will end up at Jones Bar-B-Q Pit. (See Figure B.) But, you need to be aware of the hours of operation. Rev. Jones only sells meat on Saturday mornings from April or May to Labor Day, sometimes only until August 15. He usually begins selling meat when his customers rouse him, often as early as six o'clock in the morning, and he sells until it is gone, usually around eleven o'clock or noon. The only variation to that timetable occurs when he has a special order to get out. Then the hours of operation depend on the need.

The annual routine goes something like this: a week or two before opening Jones Bar-B-Q Pit, Rev. Jones goes to the newspaper office in Bardwell, and gives them a statement he wants printed in the paper. The statement says when the Pit will open, where it is located and what type of meat he will have. The advertisement stays in the paper for about two weeks. This takes place in April or May, depending on the temperature. Rev. Jones refuses to cook in the cold weather because his pit and serving area are only covered by screen, and the wind would make it too cold. After the advertisement appears in the paper, the next occurrence is the annual chiding by his regular customers for advertising. "They said that I'm already advertised.
People know me here and there and they say it's just a matter of wasting money. . . . They say 'what you want to put that in the paper for, we know, we heard you was going to open.'"

According to Rev. Jones, some of his customers are a loyal bunch. If the sun shines frequently in March of the year, the customers clamor for him to open. "They commence to worrying me in March. They just worry you to death in March. If the sun happens to shine, you go around town, 'Preacher, when you going to start cooking, I'm just starving to death, when you going to start cooking?" In fact, Rev. Jones has been told by some of his customers that they do not eat barbecued meat except from him.

The most worrisome aspects of running Jones Bar-B-Q Pit seem to be the rising cost of meat and the difficulty in obtaining reliable supplies of the best wood for cooking barbecue -- hickory. He obtains his meat from Burke's of Fancy Farm. His usual weekly order from Burke's and its 1978 prices are: seventy-five and a half pounds of pork shoulders at ninety cents per pound, and forty-seven pounds of sheep (mutton) at eighty-five cents per pound. He gets three dollars fifty cents per pound for pork shoulder if he takes the bone and fat out, or he sells it whole for three dollars per pound. Rev. Jones says there is more waste with mutton than with pork. His attitude concerning serving meat to customers may best be summed up as follows: "I don't want to cheat nobody. I'd rather give a fourth of a pound over than to give you an ounce or two under. If I give
you an ounce or two over, you will continue coming back. I'd rather give a person over than under. I can cut all day, pounds of meat . . . I wouldn't miss all day cutting a pound."

Rev. Jones' supply of hickory comes from a sawmill between Columbus and Bardwell. A man delivers and unloads the hickory in exchange for a barbecued pork shoulder. Rev. Jones maintains that it is not very easy to find hickory. He has used pecan wood, because it give a good flavor, but it makes too many ashes, whereas hickory gives both good flavor and good charcoal. Rev. Jones saws his wood with a chainsaw a day or two before he begins cooking. That way he can get it inside, and it will remain dry even if it rains. After the wood is chopped and inside the pit, Rev. Jones cleans the pit in preparation for cooking the meat on Friday morning when the meat is delivered. Rev. Jones usually cooks four to six shoulders of pork and one sheep. At least an hour before he begins cooking, he builds a fire in the fireplace which divides his cooking pit. (See Figure B-1.) The bricks that form the walls of the fireplace also form the walls of his cooking pit, so while the fire is burning the pit is heating. After the fire has burned for an hour or so, Rev. Jones puts the meat on the racks in the cooking pit, covers the top of the pit with tin and begins shovelling hot coals from the fireplace onto the bottom of the cooking pit. He spreads the coals around as evenly as he can so that the meat is cooking eighteen inches above the hot coals. This part of the cooking process is a very important
time for Rev. Jones.

I put my meat on Friday morning around eight, eight-thirty, nine o'clock, I'll seldom be later than nine, and I cook it. I come in here /the serving area of his shop/, I study my books . . . I come in here and I study. I'm not in no hurry. Nobody's pushing me. Nobody's telling me to have it done at a certain time. I got from nine o'clock till six o'clock the next morning to get the meat like I want it. And I'm peculiar. I never put a piece of meat on that pit without saying a prayer. Before I put my coals under the meat, after I get my meat on that pit, I take my cap off . . . and bow and ask the Lord to help me, give me strength. Give me the wisdom that's needed to do this with. And that's where I've been successful. I never . . . start pushing coals under on my merit. I'm too weak.

Rev. Jones is "peculiar" in another way. He sleeps with the meat while it is cooking. Most of the day on Friday he reads and prepares his lessons for the Sunday church service. He relaxes and enjoys himself. Once he made the mistake of sitting out on the front steps of the shop "gossiping" and was not being as attentive to his meat as he should have been. The result was that three or four hundred dollars worth of meat burned up. After that disastrous experience Rev. Jones has become accustomed to remaining in close proximity to his meat.

The glowing hot coals, never a flame, cook the meat. The coals will accumulate flames if the cook is not being attentive, especially after the meat is turned, because the meat drips more fat after the turn. Rev. Jones turns mutton twice and pork shoulders once. The meat is basted with a barbecue sauce when it is turned. The basting sauce is different from the sandwich sauce. Rev. Jones knows
through experience when to turn the meat. The meat cooks faster after it has been turned once because the heat is part of the way through it. He says, "I feel like I'm through when I turn it."

Rev. Jones believes that there is a danger of flame everytime the meat is "charged," that is, every time the hot coals are spread around under the meat. This charging takes place approximately every hour after the pit is hot. Rev. Jones constantly walks back and forth from his resting place to the cooking pit for five to ten minutes after each charge. In this way he ensures that all is well with the meat and with the coals. During this time he usually feeds the fire in the fireplace if necessary and verifies that plenty of coals are being formed. Naturally, as the meat cooks, less charging is required.

As mentioned previously, Rev. Jones sleeps with his meat. He "would not, could not leave barbecue while it is cooking." Rev. Jones does not do much sleeping Friday nights in the pit. He pulls the benches in the serving area of the shop together and places quilts over them when sleeping in the pit. He hears every move and he hears every pop of the wood. He leaves the window blind open so any available light will shine on him, and the dog outside will let him know if anyone is on the prowl in his neighborhood. Rev. Jones has not failed yet in estimating the number of charges required for cooking. He learned that through experience. Whether he is sitting in his shop in the late afternoon or reclining on the benches Friday evening and
early Saturday morning, Rev. Jones feels he has a great deal of help from a couple of sources.

I can sit here in this chair and nod and it's the instinct that touches me to an extent that I am awakened when to go on duty... When I go to shovel coals under there I tell the Lord, he knows who I am, but I thank him and ask him to guide me, and... when I lay down here on these two benches, padded with quilts, I ask him to wake me if I'm needed.

Rev. Jones believes the meat is done sometime Friday night, but he keeps the fire in the fireplace all night and morning to ensure that the meat does not get cold. When he finishes charging, the tin over the top of the cooking pit is "almost cemented" to the bricks forming the walls of the pits. Saturday morning, he shovels the coals out from under the meat, and places the meat at one end of the pit and the coals at the other end. The coals would then be three or four feet from the meat. He continues this process until the meat is gone, so the customer is able to buy his meat still hot from the same coals which cooked the meat.

Saturday morning at five o'clock Rev. Jones leaves the pit for the first time in approximately twenty hours to clean up in preparation for serving the customers. He goes to his house, thirty yards away, sponges off, puts on fresh clothes, an apron and a cap, gathers clean rags, wipes his face and hands and returns to the pit. During the middle of summer, the first customers might turn up as early as five forty-five Saturday morning.

When Rev. Jones' customers enter Jones Bar-B-Q Pit on a Saturday morning, they often greet Rev. Jones as
"Preacher" and pleasantries are exchanged. Jones Bar-B-Q Pit is approached from the road by climbing a small rise, walking past a picnic table and entering a screened front door. The building itself is mostly screen on a white wood frame and is attached to a larger store made mostly of wood which was once run by Rev. Jones, but is now run by his daughter, Charlene, who, in turn, is assisted by Rev. Jones' wife, Vivian. In fact, the store, which sells items such as potato chips, sweets and soft drinks, and the Bar-B-Q Pit are both owned by Charlene.

Upon entering Jones Bar-B-Q pit, the customer is confronted by a table, several chairs and two benches. (See Figure B-2.) There is a small light hanging overhead and a thermometer and a hand-lettered sign on the wall immediately to the right of the door. The sign reads:

- Prices -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pork</th>
<th>Mutton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 lb</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the customer walks past the table and chairs on his left and bench on his right, he comes to the serving area approximately eleven feet from the front door. The serving area consists of a bench or bar affair about chest high extending from the left wall to about two feet from the right wall, as the customer faces the serving area with his back to the front door. Immediately on the customer's right is a door leading to the store owned and run by Charlene.
FLOOR PLAN OF

JONES BAR-B-Q

COLUMBUS, KENTUCKY
Charlene. At the end of the serving bar, on the right-hand side is a two-foot opening and swinging half door which Rev. Jones uses to get behind the serving bar and into the actual pit area. As Rev. Jones stands behind the serving bar looking toward the front door and his customers, there is a chopping block beside him, scales suspended behind him, a light overhead and a refrigerator and cash drawer on his right. The refrigerator contains soft drinks which Rev. Jones sells for twenty cents per bottle. When the customer orders meat, Rev. Jones turns to his left and behind him and exits through a door which leads to the pit, the cooking area. Unless he is cooking an especially large order, Rev. Jones uses only the side of the pit under the light. (See Figure B-1.) He lifts the tin off the pit, picks up the meat required and returns to the serving area with the meat in his hand. If he is very busy, meat will be left on the chopping block for future sandwiches; otherwise he returns the meat to the warmth of the pit.

After the customer has decided on his order, he steps up to the counter, or calls out from behind the crowd if it is a particularly busy day, and places his order with Rev. Jones or with Rev. Jones' wife or daughter -- whomever is working behind the counter. When his son is visiting, Rev. Jones solicits his assistance behind the counter. The customer may order a sandwich, or barbecue by the pound, and a soft drink. If the customer wants a hamburger, hot dog, another type of cold drink, potato chips or candy, he can obtain these items by going into the attached
shop next door. To do this he has to leave Jones Bar-B-Q Pit, turn left, walk five yards and go up the steps to the store.

If the customer is interested only in barbecue, a moderate amount of barbecue sauce will be applied to the meat if the customer says nothing about sauce. Some customers may say something like, "Light on the sauce," or "Make it hot," depending on their tastes and requirements. The sauce which is put on the sandwich is different from the sauce which is put on the meat while the meat is cooking. Rev. Jones will not divulge the recipe for either his cooking sauce or his sandwich sauce.

"Quite a few" customers who buy a sandwich in Jones Bar-B-Q Pit eat the sandwich on the premises. "Not too many" sandwiches are carried out. However, Rev. Jones says, "I don't have too many loafers." The place is too small for many people to sit and eat at once. The store has been so crowded that people were kept waiting outside to get in. The majority of customers carry their barbecue with them. This indicates that most of Rev. Jones' clientele buy their barbecue by the pound. Rev. Jones also notes that most of his customers are women, and he surmises that they take his barbecue home to feed their families.

Most customers treat Rev. Jones as he would like to be treated. He says, "They respect me because I respect myself." Sometimes a person might drink too much and "blackguard" (make a nuisance of himself) in the shop. A customer under the influence of alcohol may say a "blackguard
word." Rev. Jones handles this situation in the following way: "If he's where I can see him, I might give him a look -- let him know I don't appreciate it." Rev. Jones tells such a customer that he would rather not have his patronage. He says that his customers respect him because he does not "drink or cuss" with them. He feels that he has to be particularly careful of the tone of his establishment because he has more women customers than men. He "makes the men customers respect the women."

Rev. Jones feels that honesty in his shop also helps to create the right atmosphere. "I don't want to cheat nobody. I'd rather give a fourth of a pound over than to give you an ounce or two under. If I give you an ounce or two over, you will continue coming back. I'd rather give a person over than under." He feels that his years of experience assist him in maintaining this policy of honesty towards his customers. "I can cut all day pounds of meat ... I wouldn't miss all day cutting a pound." Rev. Jones is very conscious of his reputation for quality and honesty. He sometimes feels like he is "mighty mean" because he has to charge "so much" for his barbecue.

Most of Rev. Jones' customers are white. He believes that "a lot of" his customers knew him before he started barbecuing. He has lived in the vicinity for approximately forty years and "services" a large area, which he defines as Arlington, Bardwell, Clinton, Oakton and "all around through here /Columbus/." Customers "used to come" from Missouri. His relations with his white customers are amicable. Although
he says he "wasn't treated so royally in the beginning," he now feels quite satisfied with the customer-cook relationship in Jones Bar-B-Q Pit. He "has tried to treat everyone with respect every day" and feels that he has "gained" by doing so. He offers as proof of the success of the relationship that his customers "call me the smiling preacher, the jolly preacher."

Every Saturday the amount he sells in his shop differs. He usually sells about four, five or six shoulders of pork, each averaging between five and eight pounds, and a sheep. Rev. Jones believes that hot weather is barbecue weather because "the women don't want to cook" and because "everything has a season. . . . Your appetite craves certain things in certain seasons. You don't care about watermelon in the winter time, but in the season you want it." He feels that the hot weather causes the body to crave barbecue, among other things. He maintains that, whereas in September it takes two-thirds of a day to sell four to six shoulders and a sheep, in July it takes one-half a day or less to sell the same amount.

Although Rev. Jones' shop would be considered out of the way by modern day marketing experts, he has been able to ensure the loyalty of his customers through the quality of his product and the honest method he employs in running his business. He is aware that there are competing barbecue businesses within ten miles and he is aware that they have locations which are considered better than his, but he feels that his reputation and the week-long annual
advertising campaign in the Bardwell paper are sufficient to provide him with a "little profit." He says that he could make a good living barbecuing if he cooked more often and if he let more people know about his business. He feels that if he let more people know that he is available to cater parties and other functions that his business would increase.

Rev. Jones, however, does not seem inclined to expand his barbecue operations. His customers have asked him to open seven days but he says this is "just too much." He appears to be content running his operation in much the same way as he has run it for the past twenty years. He is adamant that quality, honesty and loyalty will continue to attract customers and will continue to enable him to make a small profit, sufficient for his requirements. In this attitude, as well as in his traditional method of food preparation, Rev. Jones sets himself apart from the mainstream of modern commercial restaurants and identifies himself with the time and the cultural heritage within which his barbecue establishment was founded.
CHAPTER V
ETHNOGRAPHY: WOODY SMITH

Introduction

Woody Smith now cooks barbecue in a restaurant in Arlington, Carlisle County, Kentucky. (See Figure A-2.) Mr. Smith's education in barbecue came from his father, Will Smith, a farmer who moved with his family from Obion, Tennessee, to Hickman County, Kentucky, in 1909. Woody believes that his father learned the art of traditional barbecue cookery from several other cooks in the Spring Hill district of Hickman County, including a man named Uncle Ben Hayes. During the early part of this century Will Smith gained a reputation for barbecue cooking which enabled him to be called in to cook at several of the annual social functions in the Hickman County area.¹ It is from this Hickman County tradition of cooking barbecue that Woody Smith learned the art of barbecue cookery, and it is in this tradition that he now cooks at the restaurant in Arlington.

Woody Smith was born to Will and Effie Smith in 1908 in Obion, Tennessee. In the following year the Smith family moved to the Spring Hill district of Hickman County.

¹Unless otherwise stated, all information in this chapter is taken from taped interview with Woody Smith, Arlington, Carlisle County, Kentucky, 18 July 1978 and 19 September 1978.
Mr. Smith was a farmer and he and his family farmed in the area for "about thirty years." Effie Smith's family was from that district, so the move was for her something of a homecoming. As a child Woody remembers his father working hard as a farmer all week; then on Saturday his father would "get a sheep" and cook it for the family to have on Sunday. Will Smith would barbecue this sheep at home. This was not a regular occurrence, but was an event which signalled that it was celebration time or that some important point had been reached in the lives of the family. A sheep might be cooked to celebrate a birthday, a marriage, the visit by relatives or something similar.

When asked about the ways in which his father learned the art of traditional barbecue cookery, Woody Smith indicated that his father had learned by watching and by listening to older people who were considered "good" cooks. The fact that Will Smith had helped Uncle Ben Hayes from "around here" had made a significant contribution to the skills of his father according to Woody. Uncle Ben had an established reputation as a barbecue cook in the district; and when called on several times a year to cook for social functions or political gatherings, Uncle Ben would enlist the aid of Will Smith. This experience not only increased the reputation of Will Smith, but it also enabled him to develop the necessary expertise to cook for himself and for others when the time came.

Before World War II there were barbecues three or four times a year in the Spring Hill district of Hickman
County. These barbecues were most likely to occur on the notable holidays such as the July 4th Independence Day celebration and the August 8th and August 15th Emancipation Day celebrations. On these occasions the organizers of the festivities would choose a barbecue cook to provide the meat for the celebrants, and an offer would be made to the chosen cook. If the financial offer, and the extra arrangements such as drinks or food which might go with the offer, was acceptable, the cook would arrange for helpers to assist him in preparing the barbecue for the celebration. Because there were "three or four" people in the district who could cook barbecue, being chosen to cook for particular celebrations was considered an honor. Being chosen as helper by the appointed barbecue cook was also considered to be extremely advantageous. The helper was usually younger and could assume that if he learned from his experiences that the job of cook may some day pass on to him. There were also smaller functions in the area, usually associated with church picnics which afforded experience for the cooks and their helpers, but these were not considered as important as the other celebrations.

Although Woody Smith never cooked with Uncle Ben Hayes he believes that his discussions with his father have indicated that Uncle Ben Hayes was a well-respected, traditional barbecue cook. His descriptions of his cooking experiences with his father are, he says, identical to those described to him by his father concerning his cooking experiences with Uncle Ben Hayes and the other
barbecue cooks in Hickman County. Woody Smith is able to remember vividly the cooking experiences he had as a boy with his father, and through these recollections he is able to relate traditional methods of barbecue cookery as practiced by the Black barbecue cooks in the nineteenth century in Hickman County. He serves as a living link with this past and, although he has modified his current cooking methods to suit his new commercial venture, he maintains both traditional attitudes and skills which he learned from his father.

Woody Smith's first commercial barbecue cooking experience came when he was "about twelve or thirteen," when he was asked to help his father cook for a function at Vaughan's Grove near Spring Hill in Hickman County. Since he was five or six years old, Woody had been going with his father to sit up with him at night while his father was barbecuing with and for others; however, his first experience as his father's only helper, and one from which he made his first barbecue money, was at the function at Vaughan's Grove. The morning of the day before the function Will Smith and Woody dug the pit in which the sheep would be cooked. The pit was six feet long and four feet wide. For cooking sheep, all pits needed to be four feet wide, but the length varied according to the number of sheep being cooked. If six sheep were to be cooked, a pit thirty-six feet long and four feet wide would have to be dug. Although each barbecue cook seems to have his own pit depth requirements, the depth used by the Smiths is
within two inches of most of the pit depths used in the Hickman County area by traditional cooks. The Smiths dug their pits eighteen inches deep. Generally, pits are dug between sixteen inches and twenty inches, depending on the barbecue cook.

After the pit had been dug, Woody and Will Smith gathered wood for the fire. Will Smith preferred to use red oak and hickory wood for cooking. He used the bark from the trees which had been stripped in the forests in the area, and he used the wood when he could find it. Will Smith preferred these types of wood because they burn more slowly, make better coals and because the flavor, particularly from the hickory, gives the meat a distinctive, pleasant taste. The Smiths preferred to cook over green wood rather than seasoned wood because the coals last longer from green wood and because the flavor is more emphatic.

The next step was to prepare the sheep for cooking. The animal to be cooked was always supplied by the person, or organization, holding the barbecue. Will Smith tied the back legs of the sheep to a branch of a tree, letting the head of the sheep hang down above the ground. He then pulled the sheep's head back and cut the sheep's throat with a sharp knife. As the sheep was losing its blood on the ground, Will Smith cut the genitalia off of the sheep, creating a large hole in the body of the sheep. Into this hole he poured cold water. The purpose of this was to cool down the body heat of the animal in order to make the task of skinning the sheep easier.
While the sheep was hanging in the tree dripping blood and water, the Smiths built a fire five to ten feet from the cooking pit. This fire was allowed to blaze fiercely because it was from this fire that the coals would come which would be used to cook the sheep. Coals, and never a blaze, were all that were required to cook barbecued meat.

After the fire was built, the Smiths returned to the sheep to skin and gut it. They then cut its head off and left it to hang until they were ready for it. As Woody said,

Yeah, let it hang there until you get ready for it. When you get ready, always have a big block there to cut the shanks off, the feet off . . . and then you split it up and down the backbone, just so you don't split it plumb through, just enough to hold it together. And then you stick your sticks in there and then lay it on the pit. Skin side up.

There was no established time which the sheep had to hang. It could be allowed to hang for as little as ten minutes. The Smiths used an axe to break the backbone of the sheep when they were about ready to cook. They chopped the sheep down the backbone to "flatten him out." They then made ready the tobacco sticks which they had brought to stick through the sheep's body to make it easier to turn the animal. These skewering sticks were best when they were several years old and had been used on numerous occasions for barbecuing. The grease from the cooking "kept them, preserved them." They were especially sharpened for the task. The sticks were placed through the shoulders and through the ham on each side of the sheep's body. The sheep
was then ready for cooking.

The Smiths next ensured that the pit was ready to receive the sheep. They used ordinary American chicken wire to suspend the sheep over the pit. The wire was about the same width as the sheep and was fastened over the pit in the following way: "We drive a stick down in the ground and hooked it over, you know they got stays, and pull it real tight and hooked it over them stays and then we'd put some iron bars across to hold it up." The Smiths left sufficient room between the dirt and the wire to push their shovelfuls of hot coals into the pit. When the wire was over the pit and taut, the sheep was carried over from the block, carried by the turning sticks, and placed on the wire fence suspended above the pit. The sheep was placed over the pit skin side up. Then the Smiths began to place the hot coals from the fire into the pit. The time was about six in the afternoon of the day before the Vaughan's Grove function.

The meat was cooked very slowly. It would be ready by nine in the morning the next day. The Smiths stayed with the meat all night, telling stories, talking, adding coals to the pit and occasionally basting and turning the meat. During this time they cooked neck stew and maybe some popcorn to alleviate their hunger. They talked about the meat and about cooking, but mostly they "told jokes and laughed." Part of the process of barbecuing the traditional way was learning by watching. There is skill involved in barbecuing that comes from experience. As Woody says, "Well,
you just have to learn it. You have to learn how to do it
and how much coal, how much heat you have got to have and
how long to cook it and not get it too hot."

Watching the heat and the meat was a very important
part of the barbecuing process. The hotter the sheep becomes,
the more grease drips out on the sheep. Too much grease
falling on the coals may cause a blaze, the bane of all
traditional barbecue cooks. Ideally, the grease will come
out of the sheep a drop at a time, very slowly.

After the sheep was hot "right through" the Smiths
basted it with a salt water solution. This occurred
after about three or four hours. At this time the sheep
was also turned. Will Smith placed himself on one side
of the pit and grasped the turning sticks, one in each hand,
but cross-handed so that his left hand was holding the
stick just above his right shoe and his right hand was
holding the stick near his left shoe. Woody was on the
other side of the pit in the same position. They then un-
crossed their arms, in the process turning the sheep over
onto the skin side. The skin side was now facing the coals
in the bottom of the pit. The sheep was turned only once
more, nearly eight hours later. The turning process was
the same. The sheep was basted at this time also, but this
time the sheep was basted with a barbecue sauce. The
basting process was the same on each occasion. A mop was
placed in the basting solution and then rubbed onto the
sheep. The animal was turned and then basted on the other
side. The Smiths were adamant that a barbecue sauce should
never be applied to a cooking animal until the animal was very nearly cooked.

One of the most important aspects of barbecue cooking is the talent of the cook in judging the heat under the animal being cooked. The Smiths added coals "about every hour after the sheep was hot." They had to ensure that the fire five to ten feet from the pit was kept burning. At regular intervals, more a matter of judgment than time, one of the Smiths took his shovel over to the fire, carefully selected the "right" coals and placed them on his shovel, carried the shovel full of glowing coals over to the cooking pit and added the coals to the bottom of the pit. He had to be careful to keep the glowing coals about eighteen inches from the meat. The method of coal distribution was to place the coals in the pit around the edge of the pit, then to take a stick and scatter the coals evenly under the sheep. According to Woody, the "heat on the sides will naturally draw to the center," and although the Smiths did try to scatter the coals all the way underneath, there was more likelihood of the coals remaining nearer the outer edges of the meat than directly under the center of the animal. This actually aided the cooking process because the heat on the outside cooked the thickest part of the meat.

For fifteen or sixteen hours the Smiths sat through the night and early morning watching the sheep cook, tending the fire, putting glowing hot coals into the pit and scattering them around under the animal, talking and
laughing. The meat was scheduled to be served at about ten in the morning. Usually Will Smith received fifty cents to one dollar per sheep for barbecuing. Before serving the meat, which was served on paper or in the hand, never on sandwiches in the "early days," the meat was moderately basted with some of the Smith barbecue sauce. The serving sauce is slightly different from the cooking sauce, even today in Woody's commercial establishment in Arlington. He still uses both his father's methods and his father's sauce recipes. Woody jealously guards his sauce recipes in the belief that they are worth "lots of money."

In those days Woody shared little in the profits from the barbecuing experience, at least in monetary terms. He was more interested in "getting eats and drinks." At these types of functions, whether they were a Farm Bureau picnic where more sheep would be cooked or a political gathering in support of a candidate such as the one which has been described above, there was no dancing and no alcohol. The exception was between the years 1933 and 1935, after prohibition and before the County voted to "go dry." During those years alcohol was sometimes served at barbecues, but dancing was not encouraged. Most social functions during the summer in the Hickman County area served barbecue either cooked on the spot during the previous night or cooked elsewhere and brought to the spot. People preferred to see the cooking activities and the cooks on the spot, and, of course, it was good advertising for the cook if his product was enjoyed.
During the winter, when there were no political rallies or socials, the Smith family still had "our barbecue," when the family would parboil portions of a sheep then bake those portions in the oven, baste it with barbecue sauce and serve it.

Will Smith sometimes cooked large numbers of sheep for political gatherings.

When Barkley run for State Representative we killed about twenty or thirty sheep, just me and him. As we killed them, we'd put . . . uh . . . dress them and lay them on the back end of a truck, put the sticks in them and put them on the back end of a truck and carry them and put them on the pit as we killed them. The pit was almost one hundred and fifty feet long.

He and his son also cooked small amounts, such as the one sheep already described. They have cooked in tobacco barns and in the middle of clearings. They have cooked for politicians and for church gatherings. Always they were conscious that their dependence on the traditional methods of barbecue which Will Smith learned from Uncle Ben Hayes was what earned that little extra income and that their continued use of these methods meant their continued commercial success. When Woody decided to get more heavily involved commercially in barbecue, it was natural that he would take with him the formula for success. When he opened his first barbecue establishment, a store where people could come in and buy barbecue even if there was not a celebration or function in the area, it was mandatory, as far as Woody was concerned, that he continue in the traditional method.

In about 1925, Woody Smith and his brother built a
place in the Obion Bottom in Hickman County. The "place" was built near a sawmill "about three miles down Highway 51 from Arlington, then a half mile in." He and his brother constructed a dance floor seventy-five feet by fifty feet and set up "some other buildings" in a clearing. On Saturday nights, Woody served barbecue which he cooked over a pit in the Smith Family tradition on the site. There was usually a band from Cairo, Illinois, or at least a piano player. Refreshments, in the form of cold drinks and "bootleg whiskey," were served by Woody and his brother. The crowd, sometimes as many as five or six hundred people, "came from everywhere." This was Woody's first foray into business, and it lasted until too many people complained about the sale of liquor and the general atmosphere of the place, "probably a couple of years."

For the next couple of decades, Woody farmed and barbecued on social occasions. He followed his father as the local barbecue cook for the Farm Bureau Picnics, church socials and local political gatherings. The summer gatherings in and around Hickman County "always" had barbecue, so Woody was busy cooking "most weekends" during the 1930s and '40s.

In the "early 1950s" Woody Smith decided to quit farming and go into barbecue full time. Before making this decision, Woody consulted his wife and family. They decided that Woody's skills and reputation were sufficient to guarantee them an income. "Things were cheaper then" and this fact helped ensure the success of the venture.
With the help of his family, friends and his father, Woody built a concrete block pit about fifteen feet long and about four feet wide. They built a building around it, but the pit dominated the structure. The business was located at the Spring Hill Y, at the intersection of Highways 51 and 809 in Hickman County.

Woody started in this business with two shoulders of pork and a quarter of a sheep. He did not advertise when he opened the shop because it was "right there on the road anyway" and he "figured it would be the last stop the boys'd make Saturday night on the way home." Woody kept the restaurant at the Y open "all day and part of the night, all year, every month, seven days a week" unlike many other rural eateries in the area, which close earlier. He cooked in the traditional way, that is, he cooked the meat all night and served during the day when he first started out. His father offered advise if he felt Woody was going to make a mistake but was not actively involved in the cooking. The family members did sometimes help serve the customers their sandwiches and their pounds of mutton or pork. The reputation of Woody's Y Barbecue spread by word of mouth, and business was brisk.

It was at the Y, "almost as soon as I opened," that Woody had the idea to cover the meat while it was cooking. He placed sheets of tin over the top of the pit because he thought they would reflect the heat back down on the cooking meat. He consulted with his father on this matter, and his father thought it was a "good idea to cover the pits to keep
the heat in." According to Woody, Will Smith said, "Maybe we can cook it quicker . . . it won't let the heat go up . . . it will hold the heat in on the meat." This radical change in the traditional method of barbecuing has not affected the taste of the meat too much, according to Woody. There is a slight difference brought on by the fact that in a covered pit, the steam off the meat "comes down" whereas in a uncovered pit, the steam "went out," but the overall effect, he maintains, is negligible.

When Woody first started covering barbecue pits, his customers "didn't say anything about it, just that it was mighty good." Some evidently commented that the tin would "keep a lot of the dust off" the meat. Woody says that the State Health Department "didn't pay any attention to that" in those days. He was influenced in his decision to depart from traditional methodology not by health inspectors, but by his belief that covering the pits would hold the heat in on the meat more. When his customers continued buying the finished product, the proof of the correctness of his experimentation was confirmed. Of the idea to cover meat, Woody says he "just picked it up, thought it would be better."

The Y Barbecue burned down "after about four or five years," and Woody and his family moved to Clinton, in Hickman County. A man named Harper, who is in the country ham business, built a restaurant for Woody on Highway 51 between Clinton and the site of the Y Barbecue. The arrangement was for Woody to rent the building from Mr.
Harper, a situation which lasted for fifteen or sixteen years.

Business at Woody's Barbecue was good, and Woody was able to make a comfortable living and enhance his reputation as a barbecue cook until a family altercation resulted in his incarceration for a brief period. The business declined without his guidance.

While cooking at Woody's Barbecue, Woody and his family sold not only barbecue but soft drinks, potato chips and candy. A daughter and a local boy were employed full time to sell the goods and to assist Woody in small ways in cooking the meat. During this time, he built up his reputation to such an extent that he supplied barbecue meat to other local establishments and to a gathering held at Keeneland Race Track in Lexington. Most of the meat he supplied to local restaurants was to supplement their normal fare of plate lunches and fish dishes; however, he also sold barbecue to one barbecue restaurant in Fulton. He once cooked a whole pig for a restauranteur from Indianapolis, Indiana, who brought the pig down to Woody and then came back later to pick it up. Woody was very busy during this time, working all day and part of the night, seven days a week, every month, all year.

The cooking arrangement at Woody's (later known locally as Nicky's) was a vast improvement over the Y Pit. At Woody's, Mr. Smith had two pits, each thirty feet long by four feet wide. He was able to cook large amounts of barbecue at one time on these pits. The most he ever
cooked for one person was fifty pork shoulders, and the largest order was the five hundred pounds of barbecued meat he sent to Keeneland Race Track in Lexington in "about 1970, 1971." These large orders were due solely to the reputation which Woody had established and which extended past the boundaries of Hickman County.

In 1975 Woody Smith left the barbecue establishment which Mr. Harper had built for him on Highway 51. In December, 1977, he was employed to cook in Rust's Barbecue in Arlington, Carlisle County, Kentucky, a community near the Hickman County border. In this restaurant, Woody is no longer his own boss. He and the owner do not get along, primarily because of the boss's attitude toward Woody but also because of the fact that "the owner and cleanliness are strangers." Although business is "okay," Woody would prefer to move to a larger town like Paducah or Lexington and cook for himself. Woody finds it difficult being black and working for a white man who owns the restaurant and uses Woody to attract customers.

**Description**

"... We've done cut it down to the short way."

Rust's Barbecue is just off Highway 51 in Arlington. If driving down Highway 51 from the north, one turns right at the caution light in Arlington, crosses the railroad track and pulls in to a concrete block structure immediately on the left. There is a difficult-to-discern sign hanging from the front of the building which, upon close inspection, reveals the words "Rust's Barbecue." (See Figure C.) The
place is open only on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and on those days there is always smoke billowing from the rear of the building. An old white Ford and several older model pick-up trucks are frequently scattered about the small gravel parking lot. Rust's opens during the colder months as well as during the summer, so the restaurant serves as a warm place to meet during the fall and winter.

When one enters Rust's Barbecue through the front door on the right hand side of the building, the eyes are forced to quickly adjust to the stinging smoke, and the nose is seduced by the pleasant odors. An office is on the immediate right, and there is an old table surrounded by four chairs in front of the door and near the center of the single room which comprises Rust's Barbecue. (See Figure C-1.) There is every possibility that several men will be seated around the table, talking and taking surreptitious drinks from cans of beer or bottles of liquor after establishing that the new customer is not one to report the incident to the State Police. Evidently the local constabulary turns a blind eye to some of the activities of the customers of Rust's Barbecue.

The stove is to the right of the table and toward the rear of the building. On the left, after entering the front door, there is a walk-in cooler which contains meat to be barbecued, cans of soft drink and, occasionally, cans of beer. Adjacent to the cooler is the air compressor which runs it, then a soft drink machine next to the serving counter. Directly across the building from the
compressor is the stove, and across from the soft drink machine is a sink. There is an open area between the serving counter and the sink. This open area gives access to the barbecue pit which is behind the counter. The mandatory, but inadequate, rest room is located through a door which opens from the right side of the building, approximately between the table and the stove.

To me, the most impressive aspect of Rust's Barbecue is the pit. (See Figure C-2.) It is well-constructed and has a unique covering system designed by Woody and installed by the owner. The pits are two twelve foot by four foot concrete block structures, divided in the middle by a fire box made of fire bricks. Inside the pits there is a shelf of steel mesh which is approximately eighteen inches from the bottom of the pit. Above the pits are four sheets of steel, two sheets above each pit. These sheets of steel fit hard down on top of the pits. They are controlled by a rope attached to a lever and weight arrangement which Woody devised especially for this restaurant. The cook can pull the rope, easily, and lift the steel sheet off the top of the pit. The sheet will stay at any height above the pit when adjusted by the cook. The sheets of steel are there not only to satisfy health regulations, but to keep the heat in. Woody has been following his ideas about the advantages of covering pits since his days at the Y. Because it is so important to keep the heat in, as far as Woody is concerned, he set up two sheets over each pit so he can check one side of the
pit without greatly diminishing the amount of heat in the other side. Although there is no dividing wall within each pit, there is a considerable amount of heat retained in the covered side of the pit even though the sheet is raised from the other side. Woody's arrangement also allows him to raise the sheets of steel the minimum amount to check on the meat. The hickory and red oak wood which is burned in the fire pit to supply the coals for cooking is located out a door which is immediately to the right of the pits.

Woody Smith lives in Arlington with some members of his family. He has only a short distance to travel on Thursday mornings when his work begins. At six in the morning every Thursday, Woody opens the front door to Rust's Barbecue and starts work. He brings the wood in (it is kept under cover outside) and starts a roaring fire in the fire pit. While the fire is burning into coals he cleans the pits, usually with a wire brush. He takes the meat out of the freezer. The meat is either delivered on the day cooking begins or on the previous day when it is placed in the freezer by the owner. After the fire has burned about an hour, Woody places the meat on the steel mesh shelves and begins shovelling coals from the fire pit underneath the shelves. To do this he has to pull away the steel doors covering the openings to the bottom of the pits, scrape together a shovelful of hot coals and distribute them underneath the meat. It is usually seven o'clock when the cooking begins.

Woody cooks chickens, ribs and shoulders of pork
and mutton on Thursdays. He is able to sell the chickens and the ribs by noon because they take only five hours to cook, but the other meat is for sale on Friday morning. Woody cooks chickens and ribs in much the same way. He spreads the chickens out flat, the way he and his father did whole sheep, and places the flattened chickens and the ribs on the steel mesh "outside up." He turns them twice so they end up "skin out." He bastes them with barbecue sauce only once, after they are done and while they are still hot. The owner will usually come in to help Woody sell and to bring the bread in preparation for the next day's sandwich sales. Thursday is not a busy day, but local people do drop in to buy a barbecued chicken or "a mess of ribs" for their lunch or to take home for Thursday night dinner. At approximately hourly intervals Woody fires the pits. He takes more shovelfuls of coals from the fire and places them under the meat. He must, of course, keep the fire in the fire pit blazing so that it produces the right sort of coals.

Woody stopped sleeping with the meat when he perfected his method of covering the meat. At Rust's Barbecue, Woody stops firing the cooking pits at eight in the evening. The pit will retain its heat and the meat will continue to cook for "a few hours" after the firing ceases. He then is able to leave the meat, after he has ensured that there is no chance of a blaze, and go home.

Yet another change in methodology from the days when he cooked with his father is that he no longer bastes the
meat with salt water. Woody says that he does not use salty water because he cooks so much and basting with salt water is "unhandy." He is also less likely to baste meat while it is cooking because "these days and times people have so many ulcers," and he is afraid they may be damaged by the sauce. When he does baste, he follows his father's recipe for the basting sauce, and he uses his father's serving sauce. Another change in methodology is that he turns the meat only once between seven in the morning and eight in the evening. When Woody says, "We've done cut it down to the short way," he is talking about the changes that have been made from the traditional methods to suit a more commercial establishment. He is talking about expediency and customer service. He is talking about cutting costs to improve profits. He is talking about being caught between the past and the present, between following the traditional methodology which he learned from his father and "modernizing" in order to succeed in the commercial world.

When Woody goes into Rust's Barbecue on Friday and Saturday morning the routine is much the same. He again has to build the fire in the fire pit. He checks on the meat which he cooked the day and night before and which is now cooked and still warm. On Friday morning he has to put more pork and mutton on to cook, but on Saturday he does not have to do this. He prepares to serve so that by noon he has already been selling sandwiches and barbecue by the pound for an hour, and at noon he can begin selling
the barbecued chickens and ribs which he put on at seven in the morning. On Fridays, Woody sells approximately twelve shoulders of pork and mutton, fifteen chickens and thirty or forty pounds of ribs. Each shoulder weighs about eight to ten pounds. He serves no other food in the shop. He does have a soft drink machine which is used by "about a quarter of" the customers. He charges the following prices as of September, 1978:

$3.75 lb. pork shoulder  
$3.75 lb mutton  
$2.75 lb. ribs  
$2.75 chicken  
$1.00 sandwich.

Woody barbecues more pork than mutton. There used to be a more plentiful supply of mutton than there is now, "used to every farmer in the county had sheep . . . you could get one for four, five or six dollars." It is hard to find sheep in the Jackson Purchase area today, so more pork, which is readily available, is barbecued. According to Woody, "a lot of people want mutton, but it's too hard to get -- what you get is too poor, not worth barbecuing." He does not barbecue beef in Rust's Barbecue, but he has in the past barbecued beef. He cannot remember any beef being barbecued before the last ten to twenty years.

When a customer enters Rust's Barbecue, he usually walks up to the serving counter to place his order. While his order is being prepared he may take a soft drink from the soft drink machine. He then returns to the counter, collects his order, pays his money and leaves. Some customers do eat in the restaurant, but "not very many."
There are some friends of the owner who frequently use the table and chairs as a lounge area, and this discourages all but their friends from eating in the shop. Most of the customers are White people. Woody says that most of his customers at all of his barbecue establishments have been Whites. Most of the customers who patronize Rust's Barbecue are men, although a number of local women are regular customers.

During the busy periods, the owner takes the orders and makes the sandwiches or cuts off the barbecue portions, while Woody tends the meat he is cooking and looks after the fire and the heat. The cutting board is located on a shelf behind, but connected to, the counter. The customer can see his meat being cut and weighed. He can see his sandwich being made. The customers and the owner often exchange pleasantries, but Woody does not frequently enter into discussions with the customers, even though he is often forced to wait on the customers. He is pleasant to the customers, but there seems to be a pervasive attitude on the part of the customers that the owner is the one to converse with, not the cook.

Woody believes he is giving the community a service by cooking barbecued meat and selling it to the public. He thinks he has a good reputation as a barbecue person, but "I never was a hand to brag on myself" is a fair indication of his humility. Woody feels that his good reputation comes from what he learned from his father and from his own experiences. He is willing to let "the people be
Woody has customers from "everywhere." He says that they look him up for barbecue. They seem to feel it is an honor to them to eat Woody's barbecue. Perhaps that explains their reticence to converse with Woody. "Lots" of Woody's customers will not eat anything but Woody Smith barbecue.

Woody is able to judge meat and fires by looking at them. He says, "It's a gift." He feels he is as good a judge of raw meat as cooked meat. Meat is barbecued properly if it all falls off the bone when a shoulder is dropped. Meat should always be served in pieces, never slices, because, Woody says, "When it's sliced it's not cooked good . . . if you can slice it off it's not real barbecue."

Woody does taste others' barbecue from time to time. He prefers his sandwiches of pork barbecue with a little salt and with a mild sauce on the meat just before it is put between the slices of bread or the buns. He never eats a barbecue sandwich at his own pit. He always feels like "something else." He believes that breathing in the odor from the "grease and stuff will do you as much good as eating."

The barbecue people (cooks) in the area do not cooperate with each other, according to Woody. There is no communication. They "just go ahead on our own." He is aware of the local competition and has a healthy respect for Rev. E. J. Jones in Columbus. He says that Rev. Jones is "about the next oldest" barbecue cook in the area, and
he is aware that Rev. Jones still cooks in the traditional style.

Woody is proud of the work he does. He likes to do it. He enjoys cooking and feels that he could operate a large commercial enterprise if given the opportunity. He "could cook two hundred shoulders in two days and still turn out good barbecue." According to Woody, the key to good barbecue is time and patience. "When you put your mind on your barbecue, you got to sit right there and cook it, because you fire up and go off, grease liable to drop down and blaze up, when you catch all them shoulders afire, you just as well to call the fire department." He has "taken several in" and tried to teach them, but, "Time has got so fast now that . . . they don't even have time to sit down, let alone go along that slow for twelve to fifteen, sixteen hours." Because of this change in attitude and in life styles, Woody feels that traditional barbecue cookery will die with the older cooks. He does not seem to see that the changes he has made in his cooking technique are indicative of these same changes he decries in the younger generations. He is unaware that the tradition is not only dying because of a dearth of people willing to learn and carry on with the tradition, but also it is dying because of the subtle alterations made to the traditional methodology in the name of commercial enterprise and modernization.
Woody Smith and Rev. E. J. Jones are linked in this thesis for several reasons. They share knowledge of a traditional method of food preparation, and they are both current practitioners of this method. They both learned how to barbecue meat in Hickman County, and they have chosen to spend over twenty-five years of their lives cooking and selling meat there. They have respect for each other as traditional barbecue cooks and as commercial competitors. They share fine reputations as barbecue cooks, and the product each serves is better than can be found elsewhere. They also provide a unique illustration of the changes in foodways that are occurring in Hickman County. While Rev. Jones follows the barbecue tradition as well as he can within the limitations of commercial viability, Woody Smith slightly alters his methodology in the name of expediency and increased profits. This change in method provides the ethnographer with an opportunity to reflect on the meanings of these alterations and their significance for the culture as a whole.

As a participant observer of the foodways traditions of the Jackson Purchase for over thirty years, I am in a unique position to note and interpret the changes which have occurred in that area. As a folklorist who has studied
the barbecue tradition and the current commercial manifestations of that tradition in Hickman County and elsewhere, I feel that my observations concerning the changes in foodways traditions will provide insight into the types of cultural alterations in progress in the area and the meanings of these changes for the area’s people.

Both Rev. Jones and Woody Smith learned that time was an important element in barbecue cookery. They were taught, and in fact they learned through experience as well, that the meat must be cooked for a long period of time over glowing coals. They were taught that the meat could not be hurried, that to do so would only result in less tender meat. They were also impressed with the importance of routine in cooking. Each man was able to relate to me in detail the steps to be taken in order to cook barbecue properly. They each related these procedures in sequence as though the sequence was sacrosanct. They claim to follow a specific order in the preparation of their meat. They depend on the time and the order of their cooking in the same ways that their customers depend on the finished product having the same taste and texture as it has "always" had, a quality which some customers believe is attributable to the amount of time taken in preparation of the barbecued meat. It is the time taken and the structure of the cooking sequence more than the finished product which determines the traditionality of the process. Both men believe this to be true.

Woody’s statement, "... We’ve done cut it down
to the short way," is all the more meaningful in light of the importance of time and order in barbecue tradition. To admit that he strives to achieve the same result through a substantial decrease in the amount of effort and time devoted to cooking the meat is an admission that Woody is subtly altering the method of barbecuing which he learned from his father, and indirectly from others imbued with knowledge of the traditional methodology. Woody's alteration of the method of barbecuing is indicative of a change in attitude brought about by his dependence on his commercial success for sustenance. Rev. Jones maintains his traditionality because it is the best way he knows. He has not had to depend on his commercial success for his sole means of income, so he has not been required to look for ways of "improving" his cooking methods. Woody is able to produce more with the loss of less wood because of his adoption of new techniques. This makes the profit margin greater and ensures that the customers who come into Rust's Barbecue will be able to obtain what they desire. Whether or not the quality is maintained is a matter that can be decided only by long-standing customers.

    Rev. Jones seems certain that if he had to cook barbecue more often than he does the quality would suffer. Woody has to cook barbecue three days a week, and the economics of the situation dictate that he not let the standard of the fare decline. If the customers become unhappy with the food served at Rust's, Woody may be asked to find another job. Woody is competing with standard
restaurants but is required to cook fifteen hours a day or more while maintaining and regulating wood fires. It is not surprising that traditional barbecue methodology is undergoing considerable change in competition with restaurants whose cooking stoves begin working with the turn of a switch.

Woody's customers are used to restaurants being open six days a week or more. Woody's customers are accustomed to fulfilling their expectations at a restaurant. Woody has to ensure that on the days when he is open he serves food which satisfies both the customers expectations and their hunger. He has to have a sufficient amount of food cooked and it must be traditional in its taste. Because more and more people are eating out in restaurants of various kinds in Hickman County and the entire Jackson Purchase, the smaller establishment such as Rust's Barbecue is being forced to change in order to compete. The current trend is for the smaller businesses to close as the larger restaurants become more "sophisticated," imitating the "big city" restaurants with salad bars and an expanded menu.

These changes are brought about through an increased exposure to other ways of doing things via the media, primarily television and the cinema. The improvements in transportation have also aided in the demise of the local, specialty restaurant which is representative of the cultural traditions of the region. The barbecue restaurant has been one of the first of the regional restaurants to
feel the need to change or close. Some barbecue restaurants in the Purchase have expanded their menus to include items such as hamburgers. Others have become more competitive in the area by including other regional specialties such as catfish along with those items found in most restaurants in the South appealing to the broadest section of the consuming public. The result has been that barbecue, because of the time, the wood fires and the general lack of expertise of cooks, has become a food of second consideration on most menus in the Purchase. Some restaurants that once were considered barbecue restaurants now buy barbecue from the area's few traditional cooks and serve it as their own. Other restaurants with no barbecue history buy pre-packaged barbecue from one of the large wholesale suppliers of food in the area and serve it on the pretense that they are maintaining a Western Kentucky tradition. The end result is that many Purchase citizens believe that one can no longer buy "real" barbecue. If the current trends continue, they may be right.

Rev. Jones's sleeping with his barbecue to ensure that it is safe and to fuel the fires in order to maintain the constant, controlled heat necessary for good barbecue seems like an archaic exercise in light of modern restaurant practices. Fast food and barbecue have little in common. The attitudes behind the marketing of appetite-satisfying items and the creation of six pounds of meat cooked and basted to perfection are very different. The belief that it takes time, patience and care to create
food is considered out-of-step by most people in society today. The people of Hickman County are no exception. If the media creates the image that it is fun or very chic to eat certain types of food in certain types of restaurants, people tend to follow the mob. The ethic seems to be that the less time it takes to do anything, including preparing food, the better that something is. Mass commercialization of restaurants, and the power of the money behind that commercialization, plays on the group mentality in human society. Regional traditions and customs are neglected in the desire to be part of the group, that large numbers of Americans who are discovering what "fun" it can be to eat at a certain restaurant or who are being enticed to "join the crowd" at a certain eating place. The lure of the exotic, the larger town or city, anyplace but the commonplace, is also an important factor in luring Hickman Countians to Fulton, Mayfield or Paducah to eat.

The result has been the decline in restaurants serving barbecued meat in its various forms. Those restaurants which are intent on competing with mass commercialization of food will have to change. Recent history has shown that the power of popular culture is stronger than traditional culture, at least as far as "eateries" are concerned. The microwave has replaced not only the wood fire and the glowing coals, but the electric range as well. Immediacy has become more important than quality. Barbecue "cooked electric" deserves its reputation as a poor relation to the real thing. Hickman Countians,
like many other rural people in the South, are drifting away from their past. Rev. Jones will still draw in that hard-core of customers who see him as the embodiment of their traditions in barbecue. Woody Smith, who does not determine policy, will be forced to alter his methods and the type of food served if his employer wishes to compete with other restaurants in the area. These men represent the past and the present in the barbecue tradition. The future will depend on how highly the people of Hickman County value those cultural traditions.
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