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Mesa's Landmark closes its doors

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The Landmark Restaurant

The Landmark Restaurant in Mesa on Thursday, May 28, 2014.



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Posted: Sunday, May 31, 2015 4:15 pm

By Eric Smith, Tribune

Sometimes a name tells you everything you need to know about a place. In the case of The Landmark Restaurant in Mesa, its name couldn't suit it any better.

The Landmark, known for its classic American fare and nostalgic atmosphere, truly lives up to the name.

The building opened in 1908 as a Mormon church and during its life also housed an insurance office and the original campus of Mesa Community College. It even served as a restaurant before, but it didn't become The Landmark until New Years Day 1981 when Don and Candy Ellis took over.

At the time, Mesa was nowhere near as developed as it is today and The Landmark was nearly the only place in town to grab a bite. But The Landmark wasn't riding the gravy train, not yet anyway.

"The first five years were tough," Candy Ellis said. "Family members would come in and dress up and sit at a table so somebody would be in the dining room on slow nights, but it built up."

The Landmark's big break came in the late '80s when a dining critic wrote a glowing review of the restaurant, and even went as far as to tell the Ellis family that they needed to prepare for a major uptick in business.

That review is what really launched The Landmark into being, well, a landmark, known for its stick-to-your-ribs comfort food.

"We had people come in and tell us, 'Oh, you should try this, do this for your menu,'" Candy said. "But we said, 'No,' we wanted to do the heartland — the things that grandma would have put on the table."

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Many people have passed through The Landmark's historic doorways, including Sally Harrison, president/CEO of the Mesa Chamber of Commerce, who fell in love with the restaurant's salad room.

"The food was great and the history of the building is so interesting," Harrison said in an email. "As I learned more about the building and its early days as Mesa Community College, it became even more special."

However, as with all great things, they usually have to come to an end and The Landmark Restaurant is no exception. The restaurant served its last meal on May 31, marking the end of one chapter and the beginning of another.

Candy said the new owner of the building plans to use the building as a venue for weddings and other events, but not continue as a restaurant.

As much success as the Candy and Don Ellis have had they are looking forward to having more time to spend with family and their grandchildren.

The restaurant business is a grind that doesn't often carry a wide profit margin, but Candy has enjoyed her time as the owner and operator of a landmark, The Landmark, and all that it has given her.

"It's been good," Candy said. "I think this is going out the right way."

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