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The new owners of Dale's Diner, (from left) Nick Martin, Matt Frisbee and D.J. Martin, are preparing for a Tuesday, June 22 reopening of the diner at 34 N. Third St. in Waterville.

MIRROR PHOTO BY KAREN GERHARDINGER



While the building at 34 N. Third St. looks historic, the original actually burned down in 1970 and was rebuilt the next year.

MIRROR PHOTO BY MIKE MCCARTHY

## Partners Reopening Dale's Diner Plan To Keep Winning Formula

BY KAREN GERHARDINGER  
MIRROR REPORTER

When their downtown Waterville building lost a tenant in 2010, Bill and Liz Anderson decided to do some homework.

"We went to a dozen diners all over the Midwest and took the best to create Dale's Diner," Bill said. "It became such a lifestyle for people – some would come in every day or a couple times a week. It was great getting to know all those people."

In April, the Andersons put the 34 N. Third St. property up for sale. The 1971 building has two upstairs apartments, and Bill quickly had eight serious offers from those who wanted the property as a real estate investment.

"That would have been the end of Dale's Diner," Bill said.

Then he got a call from Waterville natives and brothers D.J. and Nick Martin, owners of Martin Signature Properties.

"We love Waterville and the downtown area, and we wanted to buy something in town," said D.J.

"The Waterville community wanted to keep it Dale's," added Nick, "but we obviously don't have experience running a restaurant."

That's when Bill introduced the brothers to Matt Frisbee, who has worked as the weekend chef at Dale's for four years. While Matt had a full-time job else-



The first building at 34 N. Third St. burned down in 1971, after serving as a home for several grocery stores, including Paul's Market in 1958-67.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WATERVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

where in the food service industry for the past 30 years, he was ready to turn his part-time Dale's Diner passion into a full-time career.

The three men struck up a partnership and the Andersons sold not just the building, but also the business.

Dale's Diner will reopen on Tuesday, June 22 at 7:00 a.m.

"Matt knows what he's doing. It was a perfect match with the Martins," Bill said. "For me, I wanted to see it remain Dale's Diner. I started that from nothing and want that to continue."

Except for a fresh coat of paint on the building's outdoor columns and some

interior maintenance, most of Dale's Diner will remain the same, the Martins said.

Inside, guests can sit at tables or the counter and order off the same menu.

"People love the menu, so there's no reason to make changes," Matt said.

While Matt has extensive experience working in the kitchen on the two busiest days of the week – Saturday and Sunday – he'll be out front as the manager.

"Today was my last day on my full-time job," said Matt, who also convinced Joe St. John, an experienced chef with a culinary arts degree, to come with him.

Most of the 20 part-time employees are planning to

return, as well.

"The servers always know what kind of food their patrons want," D.J. said. "The people who worked here love the small-town atmosphere. It's a testament to Bill that everyone wants to come back."

Katie Martin, who works with D.J. and Nick in the family business, recalls working at Dale's as a teen.

"I really enjoyed the patrons," she said. "The Waterville community is wonderful, and Dale's adds to the ambience and uniqueness of the town."

For other downtown businesses, the reopening of Dale's is a positive sign, said Corina Pflieger, executive director of the Waterville Area

Chamber of Commerce.

"It's wonderful to see that the foot traffic will increase in downtown again," she said. "Everyone missed Dale's Diner and we look forward to seeing them open again."

Business at 34 N. Third St. has been thriving since the late 1800s, despite a fire that destroyed the first building in 1971, said Randy Studer, a researcher with the Waterville Historical Society.

Thought to be the original location of Sweet's Harness Shop, the first building was also home to Dinty Moore's Grocery, Bill Gannon's Saloon and several other grocery markets over the years. Robert and Doris Sweede opened Village Party Shoppe in that location in 1968 and reopened it in a new building after an August 5, 1970 fire destroyed the original structure. In the 1970s, the building was also briefly a wine shop and also Herb's Variety – owned by Dale and Leslie Meyer. For 28 years, Peggy Ross operated Peggy's Ceramics, followed by Copper Kettle Confection.

The Andersons completely reworked the interior prior to opening Dale's Diner in 2011, adding a painting of the Roche de Boeuf Bridge by the late painter Jim White and a photo of the old Waterville bridge by David Munger. Outdoor seating nearly doubles the capacity in summer

months, and that will also remain.

"It was a good run, but I think these folks (the new partners) have got it and will do well," Bill said.

For the loyal Dale's Diner fans planning on a return, don't expect much fanfare on June 22.

"We're not going to have a grand opening. We'll just open and get at it," Matt said.

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