

MADEIRA HISTORICAL SOCIETY CORNER



As Madeira Kroger Celebrates Nearly 100 Years

It's hard to believe that we have had a Kroger store right here in Madeira for that long! Was it always here on Miami Avenue by the railroad tracks across from Goff Terrace? No, certainly not. Before the Fleischmann Building stood on the corner of Camargo Pike and Miami, Barney H. Kroger opened the

first Madeira "Kroger Grocery and Baking Company" on the north side of Camargo about 300 feet west of the corner of Miami Avenue. It was next to another small store that also sold groceries called Luckey's.

Sometime between the late 1920's, and mid 1930's, Julius Fleischmann built his multi-storefront structure and Kroger promptly moved to the prominent corner location as seen in this postdated picture. This second Kroger store was only 40 ft. wide by 70 ft. deep. On the left as you walked in, were open bins with potatoes, turnips, onions, red beans and hard root vegetables. Down the left side was a counter that had soups and a few canned goods and Wheaties. Grab poles were used by the clerks to reach things high on the shelves. On the right-hand side of the store were leafy vegetables that were on ice, or had to be sprinkled with a watering can to keep them fresh. The butcher shop was at the far end of the store. Wieners came in bulk and were connected together, and bananas, not always available, came on the huge stalk they grew on.



Back then, shopping was a little bit different. You would tell the clerks what you wanted and they would retrieve the items for you. Hardly anything came in a box or package. As items were collected, a running price list was written down on the brown paper bags used for carrying home the groceries. That was your receipt. Payments were made using cash.

There was one full-time clerk, a part-time clerk, one store manager, a butcher, and one cashier. Barney Kroger came up with two concepts which led to massive popularity; meat and groceries under one roof, and their own bakery that could sell bread in Kroger stores cheaper than other bakeries. These savings and conveniences made Kroger stores very popular.

There wasn't a lot of refrigeration in Madeira in the 1930's, so shopping was done about 3-4 times a week. And only enough was purchased that could be eaten relatively quick. The store manager would get a daily newspaper to see what prices the other Kroger stores in Cincinnati were running. He would then tell the clerks to either raise or lower the prices of the food. There wasn't any other source of communication or managing between the other Kroger stores. There was one telephone but, it cost 5 cents to make an outgoing call.

Ninety percent of the shoppers were women. But when men came in, some would drop off their list and then go to wait on the outside benches at the ice house on Miami Avenue. The men waited and sometimes whittled.

Barney Kroger had a motto that went something like,
"Be particular; Don't sell anything you wouldn't want yourself".

A new third Kroger store at 7011 Miami was built and opened in 1948. It was almost exactly where Subway is currently. This new store had *three* women cashiers. When the electric power went out, the registers had to be cranked by hand. This was no easy task for the women. This store had one manager and one co-manager, a full-time produce manager and a part-time produce man.



Meat was a treasured staple. It was cut by hand and wrapped in butcher paper with the price marked on the wrapper with a grease crayon. The customers were waited on and catered to, as the women were very particular about the money they had to spend.

Out on the floor in this meat department, was a 12-ft. service case for whole chickens and fish on ice, and a triple decker case for fresh sausages, bacon, hams and lunchmeat. Behind the counter, they had a meat grinder for making ground beef and round, wooden butcher blocks for preparing cuts of meat. Clean sawdust was kept on the floor. In the back room, there was a walk-in cooler for meat, and an upright freezer. Outside there was a small shed with a padlock that would hold 100 dressed turkeys if the weather stayed cold enough to keep them fresh. They sold an average of 4-5 sides of beef every week. It was a busy, friendly store. Trucks would drive down a right-hand side driveway to deliver goods in the back. This store was closed on Sundays, as a lot of businesses were.



In 1962, the fourth Kroger store was built on Laurel Avenue with a brand-new address; 7725 Laurel Avenue. It was in-between the post office and Madeira Inn. The store was an improvement over the previous store, having more square footage and multiple loading docks in the back of the store. There was also the ease of a back street entrance. This was probably the first Madeira Kroger with an in-house pharmacy and a parking lot right by the front door.

There were about four check-out lanes. One lane in particular, was a no-candy aisle so the children could not pester mom about buying them sweets. Sometime during this store's history, they started being open on Sundays.

And now, our current store: in 1981, Kroger was going to leave Madeira and focus on their business in Kenwood. Our Mayor, Mary Anne Christie, knew this would be very detrimental to the community, the city, and the people who depended on groceries within their neighborhood. We would lose our anchor store. With foresight and determination, Mayor Christie came up with the plan and a deal was struck. The George Meyer Hardware Store, a long-standing business in Madeira, and Kroger switched locations. In 1984 we got our current, newly built store at 6950 Miami. It was remodeled in 2004 and today we have a top-quality store with departments such as floral, cheese, in-house bakery, sushi, meats, deli, cards, and pharmacy. Along with 7 check-out lanes, there are 10 self-scan units and this was the first Kroger store in the area to pilot in-cart scanning, "Krogo".

Let's not forget, today, we can log-in at home and have "Pick-Up" waiting for us when we get there. Or, even more amazing, coming full circle, "Home Delivery". In 1883, Barney Kroger himself delivered his groceries by horse and wagon right to the homes of his customers in downtown Cincinnati and northern Kentucky!

Written by Carol (Klenk) Heck, 10-29-2023. References: Madeira Historical Society video recording of Robert Wick and Bob Klenk. Memoirs of Oscar Meyer written by Warren Joy, 1992. Mary Anne Christie, and Doug Oppenheimer.
Photos courtesy of Doug Oppenheimer, Madeira Historical Society, and Cleo Hosbrook.
Also see, "Let's Go Kroger-ing", written prior to this version.