

Hook's

DRUGSTORE MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

HOOK'D ON HISTORY

STATE FAIR EDITION

UNDERSTANDING THE DRUG STORE SODA FOUNTAIN

When you enter Hook's Drug Store Museum during the Indiana State Fair, the first thing you may notice is a line of people waiting for one of the craveable delicious treats to satisfy their sweet tooth. These aren't just any sweet treats. They are old-timey soda fountain ice cream delights with a heaping helping of American history that our customers have been lining up for since Hook's opened it's fair doors in 1966.



Popular Menu Items During Fair

Of course we have ice cream cones and sundaes. The show stopping old-fashioned treats include:

Phosphate: Your choice of flavored syrup plus soda water

Ice Cream Float: Add ice cream to the phosphate

Black Cow: Root Beer Float

Brown Cow: Chocolate Float

White Cow: Vanilla Float

New for 2025 Fair: *Cookie Butter*

ColdBrew Coffee Ice Cream Float

Above: Customers thinking about their order



Above: Hook's soda fountain circa 1980

The drug store soda fountain is a uniquely American institution that blended pharmacy, refreshment, and social gathering into one memorable cultural touchstone. This was made possible by the invention of the 19th century Lippincott soda fountain. The Hook's Drug Store Museum proudly houses an original marble and brass Lippincott as well as early 1900s soda fountain tables and chairs.

So why were soda fountains in drug stores?

In the early 19th century, druggists began experimenting with carbonated water as a means of delivering medicine. Carbonated water, aka soda water, was believed to have health benefits and was prescribed for a range of ailments.

The earliest soda fountains began appearing around 1810–1820 in pharmacies, offering carbonated mineral water. Things took off in the mid 1800s when druggists added flavored syrups to mask the taste of medicines—like sarsaparilla, birch bark, or coca leaves—leading to the creation of early soft drinks. Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Dr Pepper, and root beer all began this way.

By the early 20th century, nearly every American town had a drugstore with a soda fountain. It became a hub of social life, especially for teens. You know. like Starbucks of today. Young males became minor celebrities in their communities, and were known as soda jerks. The term "jerk" came from the jerking motion used to pull the soda handle. The jerks were baristas of their day.

Look all around the museum and you will find signs of early and notable of commercially available sodas such as Ward's Orange Crush, Hires Root Beer and of course Coca Cola.

Thank you for joining us at this year's fair. We hope to see you next year and every year.

If you have any ideas for this newsletter, please let us know. If you want a tour or to volunteer let us know as well.