



DAVIS' PUB

A NAME TO SEEK OUT IN ANNAPOLIS

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

When you talk about a business like Davis' Pub in Annapolis, you don't refer to its longevity in years. You tell tales of its evolution and survival in terms of decades. In the 1920s, on the corner of 4th and Chester Ave., lifelong Eastport businessman George Washington Davis opened a general store. Two decades later, his business had evolved to be known as Davis' Lounge, serving the local, predominantly black watermen in the neighborhood. In 1986, a decade after Davis' death at the age of 92, the building became known as it is today, Davis' Pub.

Current proprietor Kevin Colbeck has been working there nearly three decades. In a recent interview with the Beverage Journal, he remarked, "I started at Davis' Pub as a bartender and thought it was just going to be a summertime job. That was close to 30 years ago! While the neighborhood has changed quite a bit, there's been no need to reinvent the wheel. We've tweaked the menu a bit and made it more health-conscious. But we have a lot of the old-school stuff on there."

Colbeck says it's the customers who make Davis' Pub stand out as much as its history. "The customers make it cool," he declared. "There's a diverse universe that comes through here. We're not on the main drag in downtown. We're a bit of a find. But once you find us, you'll find our customers and our staff are super-friendly and make it all work."

Given this is the latest in our series of articles on bars, restaurants, and taverns named after an individual or even an entire family, it's kind of rare to find such an establishment that has kept the last name of a

“I started at Davis’ Pub as a bartender and thought it was just going to be a summertime job. That was close to 30 years ago!”

Kevin Colbeck
proprietor
Davis’ Pub



long-dead man completely unrelated to the current ownership. “Why change?” Colbeck asked. “George Washington Davis Memorial Park is right across the street. We’re the last of a dying breed. We’re a mom-and-pop establishment. We’re not corporate. We’re not a franchise. We don’t sit on the prettiest piece of property. The beauty of Davis’ Pub is we

‘Keep It Simple, Stupid.’ We sell a lot of beer. We have gotten a little more crafty with our cocktails. But I know we’re still a bit more ‘down and dirty’ than other places around town.”

He added, “The great thing about being in the restaurant and bar business is you see people at their best, whether coming down

the street from a wedding, or they just enjoyed some great sporting win, or maybe their kid just graduated. And then you also see them somewhat at their worst. In those moments, whether they’re getting a divorce or they’ve just lost a loved one or whatever, you can be there to help pick them up. They’ve come into your place to be around

UPDATES = MORE SALES

Call today for your Assessment!



- ✓ New Doors
- ✓ New Lighting
- ✓ New Shelving = More Facings
- ✓ Serving the entire Mid-Atlantic region



Like us at
[facebook.com/CAREYSALESANDSERVICES](https://www.facebook.com/CAREYSALESANDSERVICES)



CAREY SALES & SERVICES

Serving the Local Beverage Industry since 1933

3141 Frederick Ave., Baltimore, MD

410-945-7878 or 800-848-7748 • careysales.com



people. You want to help them get over whatever their life's challenge is.”

Colbeck faces many challenges himself, day in and day out. “We’re not a high-end place,” he noted. “So balancing between what we need to charge to keep the doors open and what I feel is fair is challenging. In this day and age, everything is so expensive. It hurts whenever you have to raise the prices, knowing you might lose some people. That’s the challenge now.”

But he says what energizes and inspires him are the personalities: “I love the people on both sides of Davis’ Pub – the customers AND the staff. We are a boating town. So, we will start seeing people when the weather gets nice, and then they’ll leave us when the weather gets colder. Then, it’s great to see those familiar faces come back in the spring. But there is our local, hard-core crowd that sticks with us year round. We also have the Navy kids that come and go, graduate, and then ultimately bring their families back. It’s the relationships! I like standing back and seeing the smiles when a customer comes in and one or more of our employees recognizes them, remembers their name, and asks, ‘How are the kids?’ or ‘Where are you at these days?’”

Colbeck went on to speak of how tough the days of COVID-19 were. From an operational standpoint, things are certainly easier now post-pandemic. Colbeck observes there has been a greater appeal to eating outside than ever before. Davis’ Pub’s sidewalk seating had been very

Thinking of Selling your Business?



“Are you looking for professionalism, CONFIDENTIALITY, and a dealmaker?”

“Do you want to maximize value with the comfort of not leaving money on the table?”

“Looking for an Industry Expert trained in the process with an active database of buyers?”

**Steve Atkins, Principal Broker
Business Intermediary**

Email: atkins.steve@comcast.net
www.atkinsrealtygroup.com

Atkins Business Solutions

A division of Atkins Realty Group, Inc.

Call us today!

410-757-4965



seasonal. “But the weather has changed,” he states. “There are now beautiful, sunny, 55-degree days in December, January, and February where people want to sit outside. I think we have adapted to that to where we now keep those options open. But, that’s not to say when it’s 12 degrees outside and the wind is blowing sideways, we seat customers outside. Then they want to be inside a nice, warm pub enjoying some food and drinks

with your friends! We have that appeal, too.”

And if owning your own place one day has a certain appeal to anyone reading this, Colbeck had some words of wisdom: “If it’s your dream, don’t give up on your dream. Get a plan, do your homework, and make sure you have fostered relationships. If you’re a ‘little guy’ like a bartender or an assistant manager, you may not have the deepest pockets. Reach out to local lenders who will help

you navigate rather than big banks who are much more likely to look the other way. And develop a clientele who would be willing to follow you.”

He concluded, “You have to be optimistic. But you also can’t stick your head in the sand and not pay attention to what’s going on. Even the smallest of problems can manifest and turn into something large.” ■



**SHOW MORE
TO SELL MORE**

- ➔ Solid Shelves
- ➔ Maximum display
Edgeless Doors
- ➔ Maximum efficiency

3141 Frederick Ave. Baltimore MD | 410-945-7878 or 800-848-7748 | careysales.com