

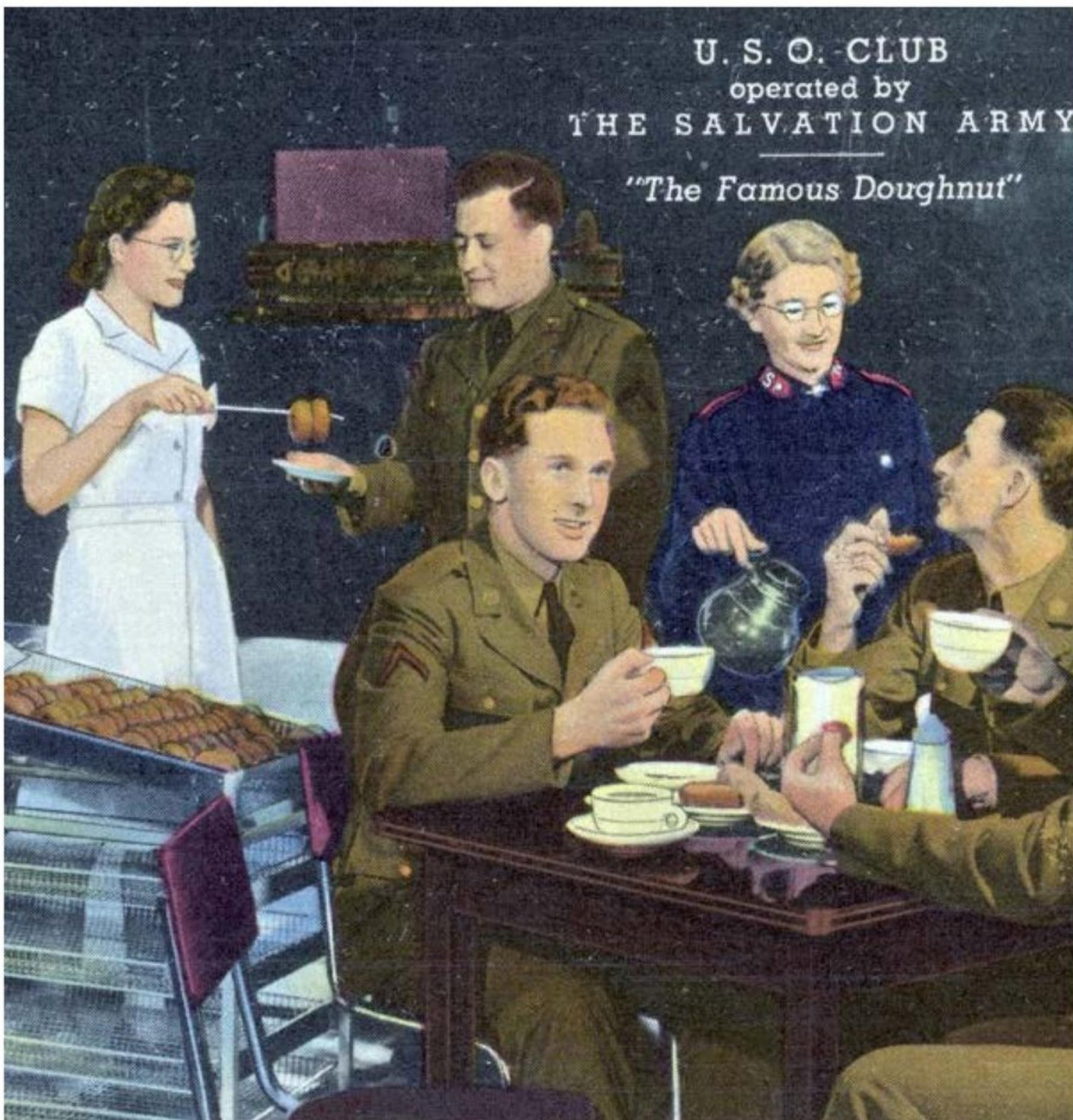
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Dawn of the Doughnut

Written by Jodi Chamberlain

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Holy Doughnuts!

Fluffy. Sweet. Delicious. These are just a few of the words people use to describe the **doughnut**. Found in grocery stores, bakeries, and restaurants, the **humble** doughnut has become a **staple** of breakfast and snack time throughout the United States and the world.

Various forms of fried dough have been popular treats throughout modern history. Tasty, doughnutlike **pastries** were often eaten during religious holidays, festivals, and carnivals throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa.

The history of the modern American doughnut, however, begins much closer to home, by the shores of Rockport, Maine, in 1847.

The Hole Story

Originally, doughnuts were not ring shaped or topped with frosting and sprinkles. They were usually round and about the size of a walnut shell. The original doughnut was mainly based on a **recipe** from the Netherlands. Dutch settlers made a fried dough dessert called *olykoeks* (OH-lee-kooks) or “oily cakes.” Olykoeks are small balls of dough fried in pork fat and stuffed with either hazelnuts or walnuts. People who didn’t speak Dutch called them “doughnuts.”

Elizabeth Gregory lived in Rockport, Maine, and was known for her amazing olykoeks. She was also the mother of Hanson Crockett Gregory, a ship’s captain. She supplied him and his crew with doughnuts for their long travels.



Today, Dutch olykoeks are called *oliebollen* (OH-lee-bo-len). Olykoeks were originally baked in lard. Today’s oliebollen are deep-fried in hot oil.

One popular legend recounts that Captain Gregory invented the doughnut during a terrible storm at sea in 1847. Captain Gregory was eating a doughnut when he was desperately needed at the ship's helm. He took the doughnut and jammed it through the steering wheel spoke, giving him the free hands he needed.

Another account says he disliked a doughnut's center because it often wasn't completely cooked. He knew doughnuts were hard to cook all the way through without burning. One day as he was cutting out the doughnut's center, he had an idea. What if the hole was cut out of the dough before it was fried? Captain Gregory suggested that his doughnuts have the center removed before they were cooked. It worked!



Captain Hanson Crockett Gregory is credited as the inventor of the ring-shaped doughnut.

Captain Gregory improved the doughnut. However, it wasn't until World War I that doughnuts became an American passion.



Salvation Army volunteers hand out doughnuts to World War I soldiers.

Doughnut Girls

In 1917, the United States entered World War I and sent tens of thousands of soldiers to Europe to fight. Constant rain and cold temperatures made conditions terrible for soldiers on the front lines in France and Belgium. The Salvation Army sent hundreds of volunteers to help the soldiers.

Helen Purviance and Margaret Sheldon were two of the first to go. They were stationed in northeastern France. After thirty-six straight days of rain, the women agreed that they must do something to lift the soldiers' spirits.

They decided to cook something delicious, and they knew baked goods made people feel happy. Pies and cakes were everyone's favorite, but they had few supplies and fewer fresh **ingredients** available in the countryside.

The women decided to make doughnuts because they could be served cold and the ingredients were easily found. Helen and Margaret cooked late into the night. Using a small pan, they fried the doughnuts on an old potbellied stove. They served 150 doughnuts the next day to the grateful soldiers.

Word about the doughnuts spread quickly, and the following day a long line of soldiers waited for a warm doughnut and coffee. The doughnuts were such a success that all Salvation Army volunteers started making them! The soldiers called the women Doughnut Girls.

Wherever the soldiers went, the brave Doughnut Girls followed. They set up doughnut and coffee huts near the front lines and risked their lives to help. The Doughnut Girls understood that they gave more than a full belly—they gave the goodness of home.

Doughboys

The term *doughboy* became a popular nickname for American troops in World War I. There are many theories about the origin of the term—for instance, it may have been a nickname for infantrymen covered in dust or may have referred to their big, round buttons, which resembled lumps of dough. The word's true origin remains a mystery. By the end of World War I, *doughboy* became synonymous with bravery, honesty, and the American infantry.



Adolph Levitt (bottom left) invented the original doughnut machine.

Spectator Sport

When World War I ended in 1918, many soldiers returned home to the United States—bringing their hunger for doughnuts. Adolph Levitt, an **immigrant** from Russia, spotted a business opportunity.

In his bakery in Harlem, New York City, Levitt began frying up doughnuts. He started out cooking the doughnuts in small batches in a kettle at the window. As he turned each doughnut over with a stick, people would stop to watch. Soon a crowd would form, and the people would buy the doughnuts as soon as they were done.



An original doughnut machine (left) can't stack up against today's more efficient models (right), which produce up to 800 dozen doughnuts an hour.

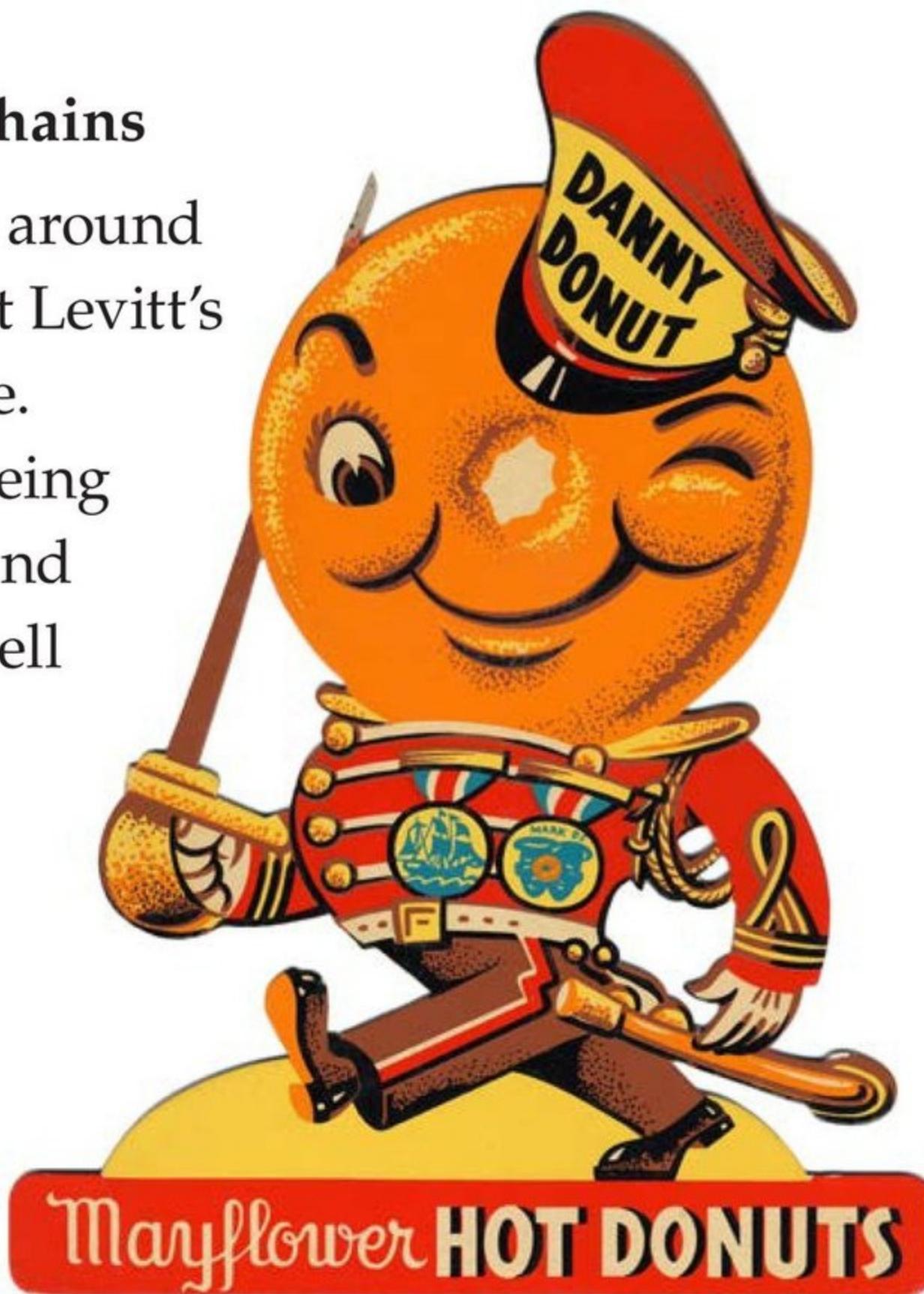
Levitt's shop became so popular that he couldn't make doughnuts fast enough. He needed a machine to make the process more **efficient**. Since such a machine did not exist, he decided to invent one. Working with an engineer, he designed a doughnut-making machine. The first machine didn't work, but they tried again, and again. Finally, in 1920, the twelfth model was successful. He named it the Wonderful Almost Human Automatic Doughnut Machine and put his new **invention** in the window of his bakery.

People went crazy for it! The public's fascination with the machine and their love of doughnuts attracted people from all over. Everyone wanted to see Levitt's wonderful doughnut machine in action.

The First Chains

Bakers from all around the country bought Levitt's doughnut machine.

Doughnuts were being made in bakeries and **delicatessens** as well as at festivals and county fairs all across the United States. Levitt's success didn't end with his invention. In 1931, he opened the first doughnut chain, Mayflower Doughnuts. Doughnuts and coffee had become an American staple.



Danny Donut was the symbol for Adolph Levitt's Mayflower Doughnut shops.

Doughnuts also became popular in part because of the automobile. People on the road would stop at doughnut stands that began to pop up along roadways. These stands provided a fast snack for busy people. In many places, doughnut stands became fun destinations unto themselves. Some doughnut shops became so popular that the owners were able to open more shops in other cities.



Krispy Kreme went from a national to an international sensation, now with more than five hundred stores in twenty-one countries.

Vernon Rudolph opened Krispy Kreme in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in 1937. He was so poor that for the first batch of doughnuts, he had to borrow the ingredients from a grocery store. He paid the store back in doughnuts. In the beginning, Vernon only sold doughnuts to grocery stores and restaurants. Then Vernon noticed that whenever he was frying up a fresh batch, people would knock on the door. His doughnuts smelled so good that people walking by couldn't help but stop. They wanted to buy his doughnuts immediately! Vernon cut a hole in the store wall and began to sell his doughnuts directly to customers.

Doughnut vs. Donut

Many doughnut shop owners changed the name *doughnut* to *donut*. They felt that simplifying the spelling made the word more pronounceable, recognizable, and uniquely American.



A World War II sailor buys war stamps at a doughnut stand in New York City, in 1943.

By the time the United States entered World War II in 1941, doughnuts had become a part of American life. Women working for the American Red Cross took a page from the Doughnut Girls of World War I and brought soldiers on the front lines hot coffee and doughnuts. Soldiers soon began calling the women Doughnut Dollies.

More Doughnut Chains

When World War II ended in 1945, the doughnut was at the height of its popularity.



Winchell's Donut House became the West Coast's largest doughnut chain.

More and more restaurants and chains began to appear. In 1948, Verne Winchell had intended to open a hamburger drive-thru in Temple City, California, but someone across the street beat him to it. So he changed course and decided to open a coffee and doughnut shop instead.

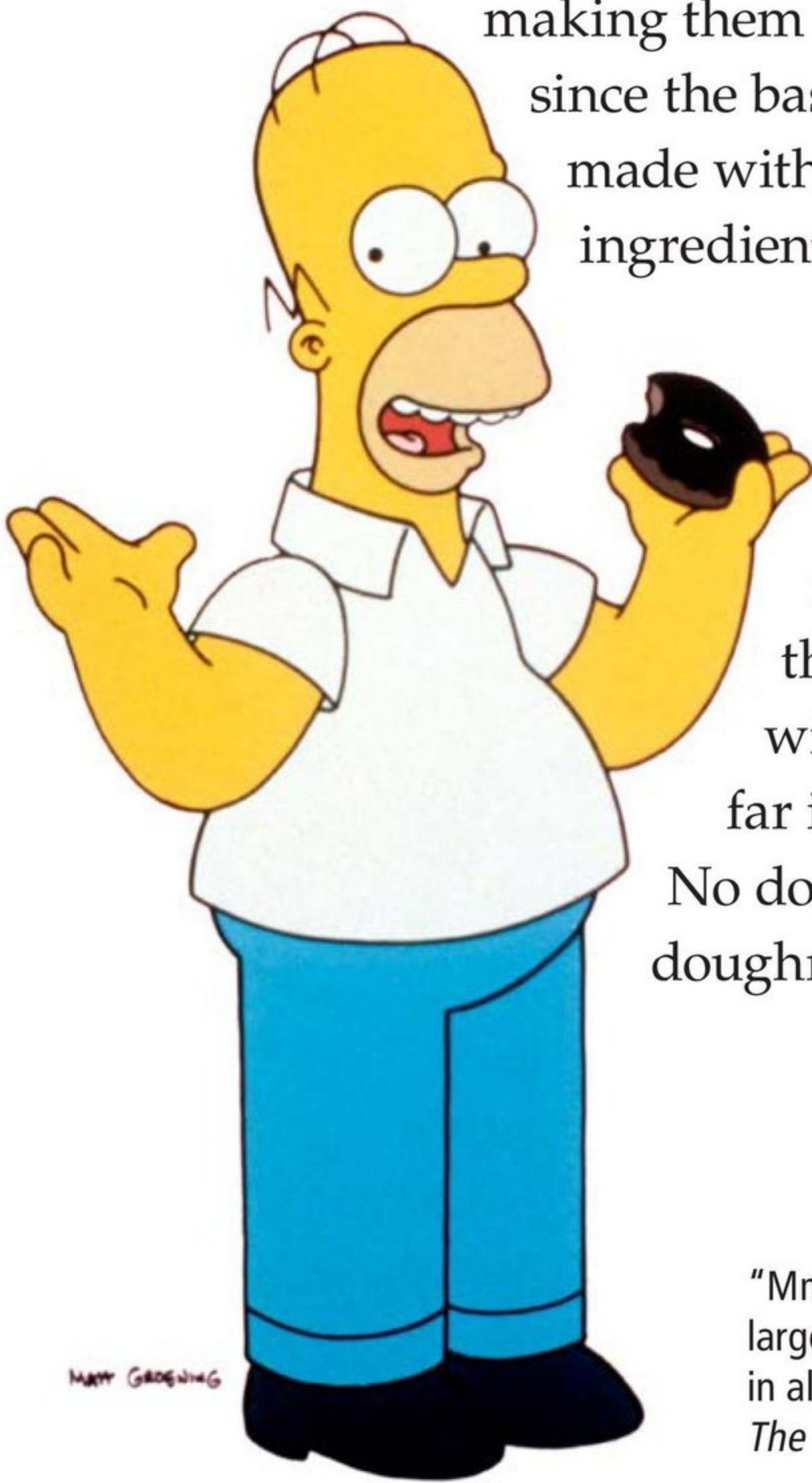
William Rosenberg had a food truck business. He parked his truck in front of a factory, and the workers would buy sandwiches, coffee, and baked goods on their breaks. He noticed that he sold more coffee and doughnuts than anything else. Since those items were the least expensive to make, he decided to open a doughnut shop. In 1950, Dunkin' Donuts opened its doors in Quincy, Massachusetts.

Doughnuts Today

Doughnuts contain large amounts of fat and sugar, so they are not considered a healthy food. As a result, the popularity of the pastry has declined in recent years.

Despite this decline, over ten billion doughnuts are still being made in the United States each year. Doughnuts are now a multibillion-dollar industry,

making them highly **profitable** since the basic doughnut is made with **inexpensive** ingredients.



Doughnuts have been around for many years, and it's safe to assume that Americans will be eating them far into the future.

No doubt the humble doughnut is here to stay.

"Mmmm . . . doughnuts!" The largest stack of doughnuts, 1,764 in all, was made in celebration of *The Simpsons Movie* in 2007.

Glossary

delicatessens (<i>n.</i>)	places where prepared foods are sold (p. 11)
doughnut (<i>n.</i>)	a small, sweet, deep-fried cake that is usually shaped like a ring (p. 4)
efficient (<i>adj.</i>)	making good use of time or resources (p. 10)
humble (<i>adj.</i>)	simple or modest (p. 4)
immigrant (<i>n.</i>)	a person who comes to live in a new country, especially for the purpose of settling there (p. 9)
inexpensive (<i>adj.</i>)	not costing much money (p. 15)
ingredients (<i>n.</i>)	food items that go into a dish or recipe (p. 7)
invention (<i>n.</i>)	a new device or process (p. 10)
pastries (<i>n.</i>)	doughs made of flour, water, and shortening; desserts made from that dough (p. 4)
profitable (<i>adj.</i>)	bringing advantage or financial gain (p. 15)
recipe (<i>n.</i>)	a set of instructions, or steps, for making a specific kind of food (p. 5)
staple (<i>n.</i>)	a common food that is an important part of a diet (p. 4)

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Title Page: The Salvation Army distributes doughnuts to soldiers at USO Clubs during World War II.

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