



Teehan's Tavern: A History

Centrally located in the heart of downtown Tinley Park at 17329 S. Oak Park Ave., Teehan's Tavern is said to have been in the same family for approximately a century. History can be difficult to pin down, though. Documents become lost. Oral histories pass from generation to generation and take on lives of their own.

With the demolition of the old building and its subsequent near-replication in 2024 as part of extensive redevelopment of that key corner, the Village – in conjunction with the Tinley Park Historical Society – set out to preserve this important piece of Tinley Park's past so that its legacy can be remembered for generations to come.

Before her retirement in October 2023, Regis Teehan, the last member of the Teehan family to operate the tavern, generously participated in interviews and provided access to family photographs going back the better part of a century. The Historical Society opened its doors, minds and files on the project to help preserve the stories behind one of Tinley Park's oldest and most cherished businesses.

Who Built the Bar?

The Teehan's story starts long before a Teehan owned the tavern. It begins with the railroad.

In 1852, the Chicago & Rock Island Railroad had been completed between Chicago and Joliet, running through what is now Tinley Park. The line connected the growing city with the major farm centers to its south. Seeing this growth, Dr. Samuel Rush Haven (the son of New England abolitionists who had settled between Mokena and New Lenox) filed a plat of subdivision with Cook County in June of 1853 for the land around the railway. Haven had a keen understanding of the railroad lines and what they meant for development. His plat set out streets and lots centered on land that was being set aside for the railroad station grounds. Land parcels adjacent to the station would be ideal spots for proprietors to set up their shops: blacksmiths, general stores, hotels and taverns.

The parcel where Teehan's Tavern would eventually be established sat slightly northwest of the station grounds, at the northeast corner of Batchelor Grove Road (now Oak Park Avenue) and North Street.



A name in paint across a board in the attic above Teehan's Tavern presents another clue as to whose hands built this historic structure in the middle of the 19th Century.

According to Brad Bettenhausen, retired Village of Tinley Park Treasurer and current Village Historian/President Emeritus of the Tinley Park Historical Society, "In the early days, the lots in the Village of Bremen often traded hands very quickly, and so we have evaluated property ownership and development by asking, 'Did an individual own it long enough to have built something?' In the case of the Teehan's property, it changed ownership a number of times between 1853 and 1856, with no one holding the property seemingly long enough to have constructed a building. It is currently believed that Godfrey Carl Diest constructed what was initially known as the Pacific Hotel in about 1856."

When the hotel was built, the railway had extended across the Mississippi River, and sights were set for the railroad to one day reach the Pacific Ocean, and so "Pacific" was added to the name of the railway. Thus the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad lent its name to Diest's establishment. The Pacific Hotel was the first business of record operating in the Teehan's building. Like most hotels at that time (and many now), guest rooms were situated on the second floor of the building, and the main level served as a saloon for guests and locals alike.

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY

Although Diest constructed the building, a business directory for the Village of Bremen from 1861 identifies John Henry Riebling as the hotel's proprietor, with Diest listed as both a saloon keeper and carpenter. Presumably, he ran the saloon inside the Pacific Hotel.

The Boldt Years

In 1876, Henry Boldt bought the Pacific Hotel, and it was soon renamed the Bremen Hotel after the then-name for the village, the township and the railroad stop. There is a lack of historical records to indicate the extent of Henry Boldt's involvement in running the hotel and saloon after he took ownership of the building, but we presume he was actively involved in running these businesses. We know that Henry Boldt was one of five saloon keepers licensed by the Village of Tinley Park beginning in 1892, which indicates his involvement with running the saloon. Sometime after the Village of Tinley Park was incorporated in 1892, the name of the hotel was changed yet again to the Tinley Park Hotel.



A man, possibly George Boldt, poses in front of the Tinley Park Hotel on the northeast corner of North Street and Batchelor Grove Road (now Oak Park Avenue) in this early colorized postcard photograph, c. 1907. Photo courtesy of the Tinley Park Historical Society

In 1902, Henry turned over ownership of the hotel to his son, George Boldt, who was 25 at the time. Like his father, it is believed that George ran the hotel but leased the saloon to others.

According to county records, George Boldt died in December 1919. Ownership then passed to his son, Henry Herman Peter Boldt, who was only 12 years old at the time of his father's passing. Young Henry (an artist by nature) held onto the building until he sold it to an Italian immigrant from Blue Island named Pete Parenti.

Pete Parenti and Prohibition

Pete Parenti and his wife, Mary Fortunata Parenti, met and wed as teens in Italy. Emigrating soon after, the couple went into business making candy and ice cream. The couple had four children: Ferdinand, Jessie, Marie and Petey, the last of whom died of tuberculosis at an early age.

Although we have no firsthand accounts from Pete or Mary Parenti, some oral history from his daughter, Marie Parenti Teehan, was recorded in 1982 and published in the Village's periodic publication, *The Tinley Exchange*. At that time, Marie said:

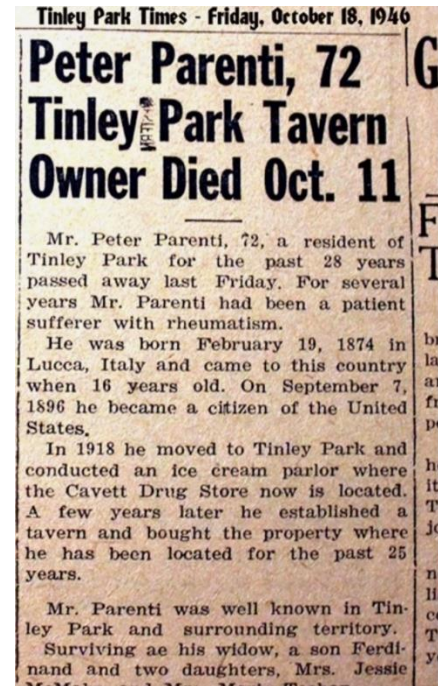
"We were in Blue Island, but my father, around 1921, opened an ice cream parlor where Cavett's Drug Store used to be [17348 Oak Park Avenue], and when that opened, that was like a big concert of some kind ... There were only 600 people [living in Tinley Park], if that many ... They'd never seen anything like that. You couldn't walk down the street. The crowds were coming from Frankfort and Mokena and all those little towns, you know, to see this place open ... the ice cream parlor ... Parenti's, Pete Parenti's. It was unbelievable."

By Marie's account, her family was in the confections business in Tinley Park for a decade before her father purchased the tavern.

"My dad had the ice cream parlor for about 10 years, and then he decided that he wanted to be in the liquor business and he bought the corner we're in now ... About 1931 ... That used to be an old hotel before my time ... My dad bought the tavern from Henry Boldt."

Here we find a discrepancy. Per Marie Teehan's account, her father opened the tavern just before the end of Prohibition, yet the obituary for her father from *The Tinley Park Times* tells another story. There, we're told that Parenti's ice cream parlor opened in 1918, and the tavern opened in 1921. Again, there is confusion. Since Prohibition began in 1920, Pete Parenti could not have started his tavern business in 1921.

Most likely, Parenti moved his ice cream business into the old saloon around 1921, and he ran it as such until Prohibition came to its close at the end of 1933.



This obituary for Peter Parenti (dated October 18, 1946) states that, at the time of death, he'd been in business at the tavern for 25 years, making the year of purchase 1921 – a full decade earlier than Marie Teehan's late-life recollection. Obituary excerpt courtesy of Regis Teehan.

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY



The name Pete's Tavern can be seen on the awning in this photograph, c. 1935. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

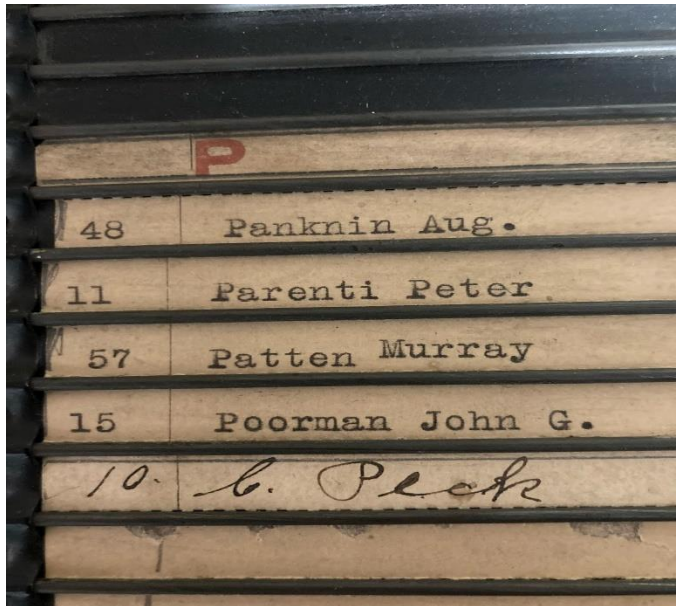


Pete Parenti (center) poses with friends and associates inside his tavern, c. 1934. Teehan's famed tin ceiling can be seen. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY

Pete Parenti took a vested interest in the daily running of his business. He was hands-on. Marie recalled him, in her oral history, serving sandwiches to his patrons and liking “the pace of the tavern.”

For nearly 13 years after Prohibition’s end, Parenti built his bar business. When he died in 1946, his daughter Marie and her husband, Harold Teehan, stepped to the tavern’s helm.



Detail of accounts book from Funks General Store. Photo courtesy of Tinley Park Historical Society



Ferd Parenti and his sister, Marie playing with their father Pete's dog, Duke. Ferd went on to serve in the Army Air Force in the Philippines during WWII. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

Marie's Story

At the age of 19, Marie Parenti had married a young man named Harold Teehan. In 1925, the couple welcomed a son, Harold Jr. Then Marie's father Pete Parenti died in 1946, and it was she and her husband who took over the business, calling it Parenti-Teehan's. Her husband, though, wasn't long for the world. In 1950, Harold Teehan Sr. himself died.

By that time, Harold Jr. had returned from the war in the Europe. He had served in a solitary fashion in the U.S. Army. His job was to lay telephone wires for communication—a mission which required him to go into the field alone, moving from company to company as he progressed. Miraculously unscathed, he came home to Tinley Park after his service. He had been learning the family business his whole life, and so Harold Jr. took on the responsibilities left by his father's passing. Widowed, Marie stepped back, and Harold Jr. took on the responsibility of ownership of the family business.

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY

With her son running the tavern, Marie retired to an apartment fashioned from the former hotel rooms above the bar. According to Regis Teehan, her grandmother had the entire hotel floor remodeled into a living suite to suit her particular needs and desires. She recalls visiting her grandmother often above the tavern.

“We lived right up North Street, and I would run down here because Grandma needed me to go to the store and I’d run down, run through the bar, run upstairs, and then go get her 40 cans of cat food for her unlimited cats,” Regis said.

In time, “Parenti” was dropped, and the bar became simply Teehan’s Tavern.



Marie Teehan (nee Parenti) stands between her husband, Harold Teehan Sr. and son, Harold Teehan Jr. – father of Regis Teehan. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

Harold Teehan Jr. Comes Into His Own

As in most of the United States during the postwar period, Tinley Park's economy boomed in the 1950s. Businesses flourished, including Teehan's.

Local pizzaiolo Jimmy Venuso started selling pizza out of the bar in the '50s, and Harold Jr. purchased a television for his patrons to watch – an exciting luxury at that time. Growth abounded.

"In the '50s, my father made renovations," Regis said. "Saloons were out of style. Everything was cocktail lounges and supper clubs, so this was Teehan's Lounge for a while. My father put in a drop ceiling, and he had all male bartenders – men who wore white shirts and ties to tend bar."



Harold Teehan Jr. and mother Marie standing outside the tavern on North Street, c. 1957. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

Cosmetic changes came in that decade as well. Knotty pine walls were all the decorative rage then, and so they were added. Red brick was laid on the exterior. Food service continued then, too. First with pizza, then Harold Jr. converted part of the bar into a dining room.

According to Regis, "Jimmy Venuso opened the first pizza place here. It was back in what became my dad's office, but back then it was a kitchen. Jimmy would bring a barstool in for me to watch him make pizzas, which was fascinating to me when I was six."

Eventually, Venuso's moved out into their own location (in the Grover C. Elmore Plaza, 17020 S. Oak Park Avenue, currently occupied by Old Tinley Pub & Eatery), and Harold Jr. bought a broaster – a newly patented pressure fryer.

"My dad had a divider (screen), and it divided the bar from the back, which was a dining area with tables and plastic plants," Regis said. "My dad had the first broaster in Tinley Park, which was some super-duper way of frying chicken. I just remember standing back from it because it was really hot. He had steaks and chicken and fried shrimp, but my dad got frustrated because he had never run a restaurant before. So he took that out and took the planters out, too."

Regis recalls her father putting in long hours. Life, for her family, revolved around the bar.

"Back in the '50s," she said, "if you had a small business, that business was like a member of the family. It took care of you and you took care of it. My dad would tend bar during the

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY

daytime and he would run home, eat dinner and sometimes work until closing ... It was the only normal I knew. It's not that I thought everyone else's dad had a tavern. It was just *our* normal."

In addition to serving food, Harold Jr. opened a packaged goods and liquor store on the Oak Park Avenue side of the bar. At that time, customers could walk from the bar into the liquor store without stepping outside. The liquor store was moved to the North Street side of the property in the late 1960s.

TEEHAN'S

New Lounge And Dining Area
No Food Served On Monday, Tuesday Thru Saturday Food Served
From 5 p.m. Til 1 a.m. Sunday 1 p.m. Til Midnite

Teehan's Presents Something New

In Prepared Food Service Come In And Enjoy Our Beautiful New Lounge And Dining Area.

BROASTED CHICKEN DINNER \$1.49 Half Disjointed Chicken, individually cooked to order in 6 minutes to a golden brown, Cole Slaw, Honey, Roll and French Fries or Broasted Potatoes BROASTED CHICKEN SNACK \$.95 Two Pieces of Delicious Broasted Chicken, Cole Slaw, Roll and French Fries or Broasted Potatoes	Seafood Dinners \$1.49 Broasted Shrimp Includes broasted or french fried potatoes, Cole Slaw, Roll and Tartar or shrimp sauce. Broasted Perch Plate \$1.15 Golden Brown Bonless Perch, Cole Slaw, Tartar Sauce, Roll and French Fries.
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Extra Large Box (20 pieces) - 4 lbs. CHICKEN ... **\$4.75**
 Large Box (10 pieces) - 2 lbs. CHICKEN ... **\$2.45**

Bar-B-Que Back Ribs ... \$2.25
 Succulent, juicy, meaty back ribs, prepared to perfection on our Solar Rib Machine, Cole Slaw, Roll, snappy sauce, broasted or french fried potatoes.

WHAT IS BROASTED CHICKEN?
 Our chicken is prepared in scientific new equipment. The Broaster injects heat units instantaneously, sears the chicken, seals in all flavorful natural juices, and cooks through to the bone in six minutes. Broasted chicken is served to you golden brown, tender, and wonderfully palatable.

IT'S THE FASTEST -- IT'S THE FINEST
 Select your order, call it in and it will be ready for you to pick up when you arrive.

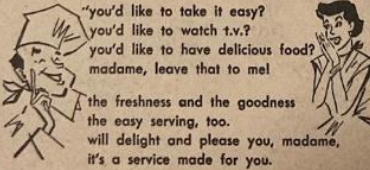
SIDE ORDERS

COLE SLAW , pint ... \$.50 half-pint .25	POTATO SALAD , pint ... \$.50 half-p .25
BROASTED POTATOES25	ROLLS (includes 4 rolls and Mister Chicken Honey and butter. .25)
FRENCH FRIED POTATOES30	

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In 1960, it was broasted *everything* at Teehan's Tavern. Photo courtesy of the Tinley Park Historical Society

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TEE TIME MARCH 16, 1965
TINLEY PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We're Out Of Our Cotton-Pickin' Mind... Take Advantage Of These Specials Before We Realize What We've Done!!

CRAZY DAYS SALE

MEADOWMOOR RICHER & FRESHER GRADE A MILK GAL. REG. 69¢ 65¢	YUSAY PILSEN BEER 12 12 OZ. NO DEPOSIT BOTTLES \$1.29 150 LUCKY NUMBERS 99¢	HAMMS BEER All Aluminum Cans 6 PAC 99¢ 150 LUCKY NUMBERS 88¢
PINTS OF Half & Half REG. 43¢ 25¢ HALF PINTS OF CHOCOLATE MILK 5¢ EA.	CANFIELDS BUBBLE-UP 3 12 Oz. No Deposit Bottles 25¢ 150 LUCKY NUMBERS 19¢	HALLER'S VODKA OR GIN FIFTH \$2.79 150 LUCKY NUMBERS \$2.59 Fifth
	HALLER'S COUNTY FAIR STRAIGHT BOURBON FIFTH \$3.19 150 LUCKY NUMBERS \$2.89	

TEEHAN'S LIQUORS
17329 OAK PARK AVE., TINLEY PARK - 532-2850

Ad from 1965 from Teehan's Liquors. Photo courtesy of the Tinley Park Historical Society



Harold Teehan on Oak Park Avenue in front of the tavern. The liquor store addition and sign constructed to the north of the original building can be seen behind him. The liquor store was eventually moved around the corner to North Street in a new larger addition to the east side of the old hotel in the late 1960s. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY



Christmas at Teehan's Tavern in the 1950s. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

Regis Teehan Takes the Reins

Harold Teehan Jr. ran the bar until "sometime in the '70s," according to Regis Teehan, at which point her brother – Harry Teehan (Harold III, but always known as Harry) – took over. A Navy veteran, Harry commanded the tavern and liquor store throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s.

"My brother was going for an Irish lounge," Regis recalls. "He had an overhang behind the bar and fluorescent lights with green glass over them. He put the back bar in and changed the orange formica counters to green ones."

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY



Harry Teehan in the liquor store with Gunilla Knutsson, an actress and model known as the face of Noxzema during the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

Regis Teehan had not planned to enter the family business. Although she'd worked in the liquor store since age 16, she had other plans for her life. Like her mother, Regis was a talented artist, and she had gone to college at the University of Illinois and embarked on a career in art therapy.

"I wasn't planning on running a tavern. I was working downtown. I had a degree in art history and art therapy and was working toward a doctorate," Regis said. "My life, at the time, was nonstop reading. I had been working on the weekends at a friend's Irish bar, and that was my social life."



Regis Teehan and her father, Harold Teehan Jr. inside the Teehan's liquor store. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

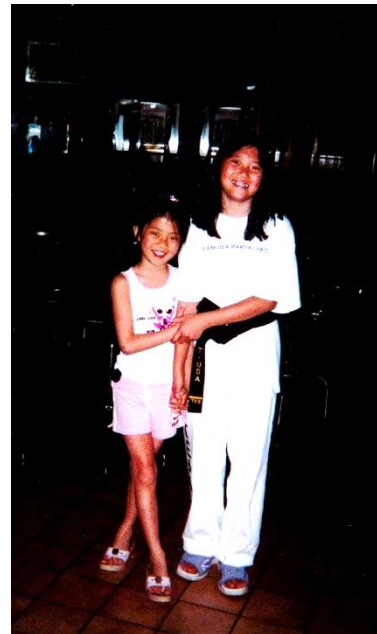
TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY

“I liked working at a bar, and my father, at that point in time, had decided he wanted to be even more hands-off. He’d been supervising my brother but wanted to step even further away from running the business. First, he suggested a partnership between my brother and me and that didn’t work out at all. So my brother decided to devote himself to the ice house [Tinley Ice, which was located just east of the tavern and liquor store on North Street], and I took over.”

The Eighties, Nineties and Beyond

Regis Teehan came onboard full-time in 1989. In the spirit of the generations before her, she devoted herself to running the tavern while simultaneously raising her family. She had adopted two girls from China, Sylvie and Mia, and she says going into the family business gave her the flexibility she needed to be an effective single parent. With Regis in charge, Teehan’s Tavern grew and flourished.

“I have run [Teehan’s] like a unit,” she said. “If the energy is low, you want to bring it up. If it’s up high, you bring it down. To me, the tavern is like a living room and your bartender is your host. You greet people when they come in and make them feel comfortable. And though it’s part of the job to make people feel welcome and want to stay, there have always been real people here behind the bar. I think who you have working for you is very, very important, and I’ve been very, very fortunate to have the best people come here and stay.”



Sylvie and Mia in the tavern, circa 2010. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

Since its earliest days, even as the Pacific Hotel, the tavern served as a hub for the community, and under Regis’ leadership, it continued that way.

“I think the role of a tavern has always been for social purposes,” Regis said. “It was a place where, in the days of the immigrant, as opposed to the social clubs the upper class had, the immigrant had the pub or saloon, and that’s where you networked. And if you were a stranger to town, you would head to the church or the saloon or both to find work and kind of suss out the community and find your place.”

In 2007, Celtic punk band the Tossers (founded in Tinley Park in the 1990s) recorded a song about the bar. It is simply named “Teehan’s,” and its chorus captures the essence of the place:

*You’re always welcome at Teehan’s
Any time of year
You’re always welcome at Teehan’s
And I wish you were here*

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY



Regis Teehan and Tossers singer and mandolinist T. Duggins (right) and drummer Tony "Bones" Broderick in 2017. Photo courtesy of Regis Teehan

"This place has given me so much," Regis said. "My touchstone has always been this place, this block. I went to school and couldn't wait to get out of Tinley Park. I wanted to go someplace where nobody knew me. Then I came back ... This place has given me community."

Regis Retires

In 2023, Regis Teehan made the decision to retire. With her daughters set on paths of their own, the four-generation legacy ended with her retirement.

In a statement to local press, Regis said, "One thing my father always said to me was, 'Change always comes,' and I guess this is just one of those changes ... I grew up in this bar, and I took it over in 1989. This has been a wonderful, wild ride..."

The Village of Tinley Park purchased the building, land and the business name as part of their plans for Harmony Square Plaza, a multi-use outdoor space that will host community events year-round. It is expected Harmony Square will continue to be anchored by Teehan's on the corner for years to come.

"Everyone I've talked with from the Village [of Tinley Park] has made me feel confident that the Teehan's legacy will be honored in the reopening. This bar is like a member of my family ... When it came to me in 1989, I was ready to carry the torch, and now I'm ready to pass it. Teehan's has been a part of Tinley Park for over a century. Our tiny farm town has grown a great deal since those days – even since I took over the business – but the heart of Tinley Park remains situated on Oak Park Avenue, and I'm happy to know that the new owners and management understand and respect the role my family's tavern has played in Tinley Park for all of these years."

PHOTO GALLERY



Looking east down North Street from Oak Park Avenue around 1900..



Teehan's Tavern in the mid-1970s.

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY



Inside Teehan's Tavern in the 1960s.



Looking east toward Oak Park Avenue from North Street in the early 20th Century.

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY



Looking north on Oak Park Avenue in the 1920s.



Teehan's Tavern on April 21, 1970.

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY



Teehan's Tavern in the 1980s.



Looking northwest on Oak Park Avenue in 1955.

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Teehan's Tavern in 2013.



Tinley Ice, which was owned by Harry Teehan Jr.

TEEHAN'S TAVERN: A HISTORY



An aerial view of Downtown Tinley in the 1940s.



Harry Teehan III in the 1970s.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Raised in Tinley Park and now living in nearby Homewood, **Angela Denk** is the third generation of her family on both sides to come from Tinley Park. She began working at Teehan's Tavern in 2011 and also works as a freelance writer for the Daily Southtown newspaper. Her writing has appeared in multiple digital publications, including Rock and Roll Globe, Leafly and SheKnows.