

Icons of American Culture

HISTORY OF NEW JERSEY DINERS

APRIL 12, 2015 – JUNE 26, 2016

Cornelius Low House / Middlesex County Museum
1225 River Road • Piscataway, NJ 08854



Educational Menu

When was the last time you ate at a diner?

If you are like millions of New Jerseyans, the answer is not too long ago. Dubbed "the land of diners," New Jersey has forged a unique relationship with these casual eateries. Stainless steel, neon and menus that go on for days are part of the Garden State landscape.

Come explore their rich history with us!

Funding: Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission, Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
New Jersey Historical Commission, a Division of the Department of State

Photo Credit: Swingle's Diner, Route 22, Springfield, NJ, Circa 1953, Courtesy of Elaine Swingle

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LUNCHES
and
DINNERS

Good Food
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"Served to please you"



Hasn't everyone in New Jersey eaten in a diner?

Diners are part of our landscape and such a part of our daily routine that sometimes they seem invisible and unremarkable. Beginning a century ago, New Jersey forged a unique relationship with these distinctive eateries, so much so that the Garden State is universally recognized as “the land of diners.”

The archetypal ‘diner’ is defined as a roadside restaurant built in a factory, and New Jersey was home to more of these structures than anywhere else. Diners began as horse-drawn lunch wagons, operating on city streets at night after other restaurants had closed. As business increased, the diner developed into a long and narrow building that was trucked to its site on wheels, then set up permanently.

Originally, diner cooking was done on the grill right behind the counter, and if you took a seat on a stool, you were treated to short-order showmanship at its best. As menus expanded, along with the size of the building, cooking behind the counter became less practical, and kitchen space behind closed doors grew correspondingly.





Welcome

Thank you for coming to “dine” at the Cornelius Low House. For those of you who have come back to the museum year after year, you know we like to offer a wide variety of exhibits. We will have a selection of more scholarly material on serious topics, then we will throw in a fun exhibit. That was the case when we installed an exhibit on the Jersey Shore, complete with a working skee-ball machine, after a two-year exhibit on the Civil War and one on the history of the terra-cotta industry in New Jersey. The same is true now: It is time for another fun one.



Icons of American Culture; History of New Jersey Diners highlights what we all know here in New Jersey. Diners are awesome. They are iconic in the state of New Jersey and are often imitated around the country. One could even say that they are modern-day taverns from Colonial times. They serve as gathering places and social hubs for many New Jersey residents. Discussions around the tables or at the counter range from politics and religion, to last night’s game. They are one of the few places where people of every race, religion or socio-economic background can go and feel right at home. Nearly everyone in the state has been to a diner at some point in their life; after a concert, on a date, for dessert or for breakfast at 2 in the morning. That is why we thought it would be fun and informative to do an exhibit on diners.

This Educational Menu is meant to augment your students’ visit to the Low House and provide you with background information taken from the text, provide you with extra images, and provide you with ideas to take back into your classroom and continue the learning process through activities and other resources. Over the past several exhibits we have created a “workshop in a box” for this purpose. What better way to lay out the educational information than in menu form for a diner exhibit?

The menu is broken into subheadings like a real diner menu, with the educational equivalent printed underneath. The CDs have extra images of diners and diner food. Maybe you can use some of these for some fun classroom activities.

I hope that you find the information useful, and that your experience “dining” with us was enjoyable and beneficial. We also hope that you will tell your friends about us and visit again in the future.

Very truly yours,

Ken Helsby
Museum Educator



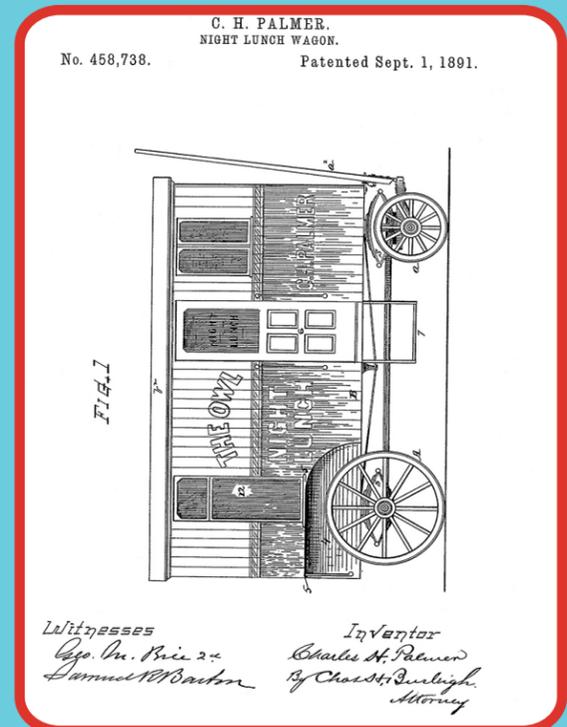


Appetizers

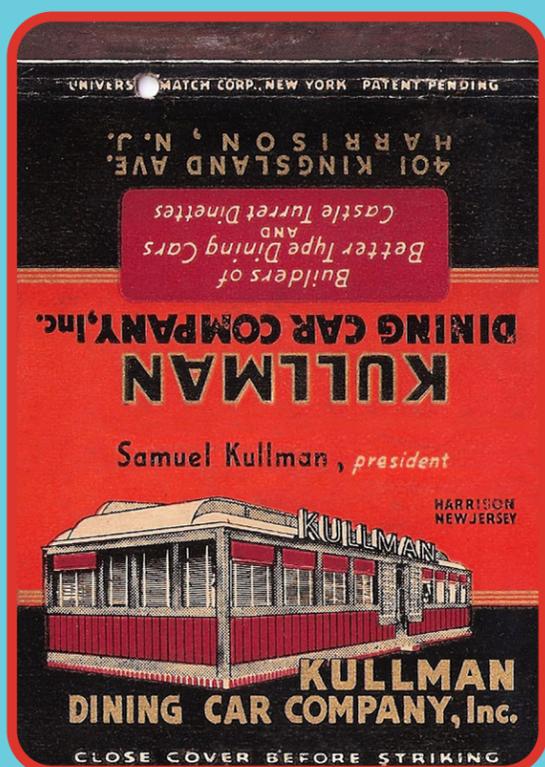
The Birth of the New Jersey Diner Industry

Walter Scott of Providence, Rhode Island is credited with starting the business that grew into the diner industry. In 1872, he first peddled food from a horse-drawn wagon to night workers after restaurants had closed for the evening. This simple fare consisted of sandwiches, pies and coffee.

It didn't take long for others to copy this idea, and soon specially made wagons were constructed to serve quick meals – the 19th-century version of today's food truck. Around the turn of the 20th century, T. H. Buckley's famous line of "White House Cafés" began to appear in New Jersey and other mid-Atlantic states. These horse-drawn wagons operated exclusively at night, often moving from place to place. Gradually, some wagons extended their hours past dawn and set up semipermanently along the side of the road.



In 1910, Bayonne resident Jerry O'Mahony bought a lunch wagon with his brother. Business was so good that they soon expanded to a chain of seven, and Jerry decided to make the leap into diner manufacturing. In 1913, he built his first diner in a small garage in Bayonne. Striving to improve upon existing wagon designs, O'Mahony's vision was that of a deluxe, stationary lunch car with every modern convenience: a veritable "Pullman," alluding to the fancy dining cars on the railroad. They were built on wheels, but these wheels were only used for moving the diner to its site, where it was permanently installed.



The Workingman's Diner

Early diners were located near factories where workers on any shift could get a filling meal at a good price. 24-hour operation was a hallmark of these eateries. They were run and staffed by men, and the customers were mostly men. Most women didn't feel comfortable in this environment.

As diners moved out of the cities and onto the highways, they became watering holes for everyone on the road, especially truck drivers and traveling salesmen. Most diners had big enough parking lots to handle truckers' rigs, and matched their serving sizes to sate the truckers' appetites.





Soups and Salads

The Golden Age of the Diner

With the end of World War II, and with building materials no longer channeled to the war effort, diners proliferated and grew to immense sizes to match an ever-increasing popularity. More builders went into the diner business, and overall diner production increased. Owners of older models could trade them in as a down payment on a new one. The urge to upgrade to the “next big thing” kept the diner-building industry going strong.



Diners, the original fast-food places, became family restaurants, and catered to the US’s growing families with convenient food and menus designed for children. Business boomed and the size and number of diners grew accordingly. Postwar prosperity led to families eating out more often, and the diner became the destination of choice.

The Turning Point

In the 1960s, fast-food chain restaurants had eclipsed diners as the quick meal, family-dining market. Stainless steel had lost its shine, and the diner manufacturers changed their styles and tried to blend into the landscape with traditional architecture, as opposed to promoting the unique buildings of the past.

It was a time of transition with some old-fashioned diners still hanging on and keeping their clientele; others were bricked over, or re-faced with stone and topped with mansard roofs. The Colonial and Mediterranean motifs made new diners look nothing like their forebears. But these new architectural styles of the diner did not adversely affect their popularity.

The Diner Revived

The diner became more than a restaurant and grew into an icon in the 1990s. You couldn’t turn on a television without seeing customers sitting at the counter reaching for Tums® or Roloids® after polishing off the diner’s ample portions. The breakaway comfort zone for the frazzled doctors on the hit television series, “ER”, was a neighborhood diner across the street from the fictional County General Hospital in Chicago.

Diners are places where the public goes for comfort food and familiarity. They are the must-stop venues on every politician’s campaign trail, where the pulse of the people is checked by the candidates and broadcast by the media. Today there are fewer and fewer survivors of the small, classic diners that were once everywhere in New Jersey.

The New Jersey diner is now defined as a large, multiroom establishment that has a gigantic menu and portions to match. These are thriving businesses that may bear little resemblance to the diners of New Jersey’s past, but still offer the same feeling of familiarity, good value, and great food that define the institution.





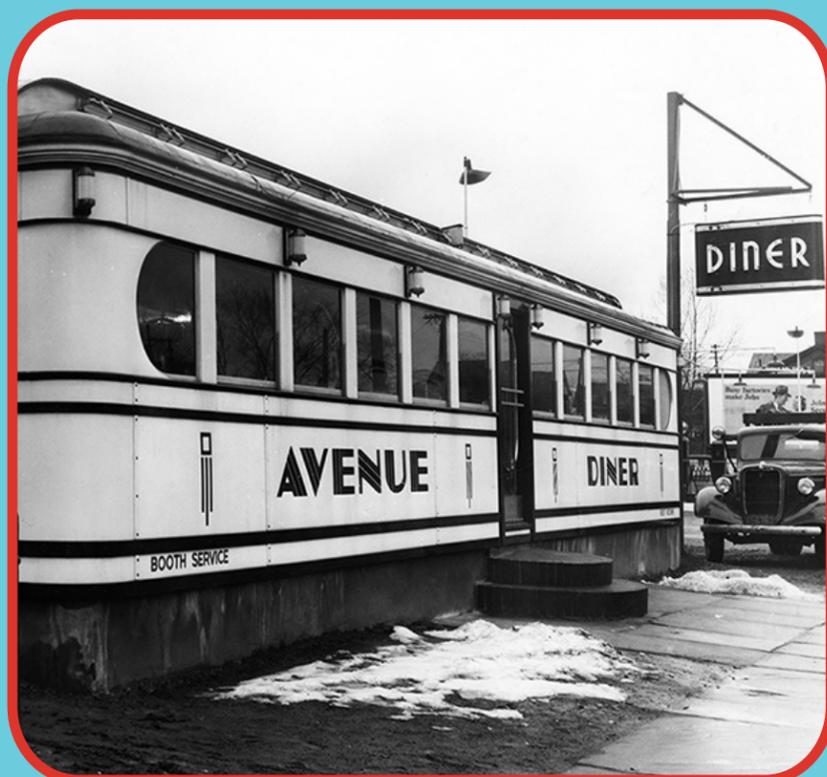
Burgers and Wraps

The Capital of Diner Manufacturing

New Jersey is the “Diner Capital of America,” a title rightfully bestowed on the Garden State by various publications. *New Jersey Monthly* issued this proclamation in a cover story in its October 1977 edition. An April 29, 1984 feature in *The Star-Ledger* declared that New Jersey was “unrivaled as the diner capital of the Western world.” Numerous articles over the years in *The New York Times* have sung the praises of Garden State diners. The title refers to the vast number of diners that populate the state, as well as how diners have become a distinct part of New Jersey’s roadside culture and overall landscape during the last 100 years.



The title also is a tribute to the many diner builders that once were based in New Jersey. The state once served as a veritable factory for diner production and was home to several independent companies, now virtually extinct, that skillfully created these architectural gems. These sophisticated manufacturers utilized advanced design and engineering techniques, pioneered the concept of modular construction, and mastered the use of leading-edge industrial materials. Classic, stainless steel diners are iconic symbols of American culture and industrial design, and continue to be admired around the world.



There were more than 20 manufacturers and renovators that operated throughout New Jersey during the 20th century — O’Mahony, Kullman, Silk City, Paramount, Fodero, Master, Swingle, Mountain View, Erfed, Manno and others. Diner production was relatively small compared with other major New Jersey business sectors such as farming, tourism and pharmaceuticals. Some diner manufacturers worked out of makeshift garages and open fields, while others had more elaborate facilities. Today, diner production in the Garden State has all but disappeared, and except for the prefabricated eateries themselves, virtually no trace remains of the process or its creators.





Lunch Specials

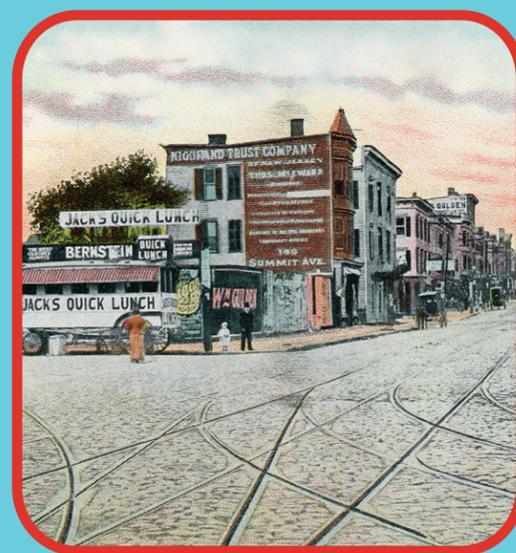
The First Diner in New Jersey

July 3, 1912 marks the start of New Jersey's diner history. On this date, a Jersey City entrepreneur named Michael J. Griffin purchased a lunch wagon — the horse-drawn precursor to modern diners — for \$800 from Jerry O'Mahony. Jerry, with the help of his younger brother Daniel built the wagon in the backyard of Jerry's Bayonne home at 7 East Sixteenth Street. O'Mahony would go on to become one of the premier diner builders of the 20th century. The contract, signed by Griffin, specified that the "lunch cart" would be situated at the intersection of Paterson Plank Road, Summit Avenue and DeMott Street in West Hoboken, which today is an area of Union City. At the time, this intersection was known as "Transfer Station," which was where several trolley lines in downtown West Hoboken met. The O'Mahony/Griffin transaction is seen as the beginning of the Garden State's diner history, as it documents a lunch wagon built and bought by Jersey residents.

Diner owners take pride in providing fast service rather than "fast food." Author and historian Randy Garbin, in defining a diner's underlying essence, said it starts with the establishment's intimate interior physical dimensions, which dictate body language and eye contact. Random seating at the counter, where customers are "entertained" by the cooking activity at the grill, precipitates neighborly small talk. Then there's the "repose" of booths, where visitors can sit back in a more private setting. It's this unrehearsed mingle of patrons that creates the magic inside a diner. Often, seemingly different individuals will discover a new kind of chemistry with their fellow diners. "There's always an open invitation to join the theater," Garbin said. "Diners are a haven for humanity. At the best diners, there's never a dull moment. The interaction of people is appealing, and on top of everything, you're enjoying good food. A meal at a diner can be 45 minutes of your life that you'll never forget."

Diner Culture

Today, diners host the ultimate American egalitarian dining experience for people from all walks of life. No reservations are required, and none are accepted. A diner is the place where wayfarers from any socioeconomic demographic can walk in and grab a bite to eat. Author Andrew Hurley, in his 2001 book *Diners, Bowling Alleys and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in Postwar Consumer Culture*, wrote that diners "challenged Americans from all walks of life to deny the relevance of class ... In guiding upwardly mobile Americans into a world of mass consumption, diners encouraged them to adopt new social rituals and new standards for social conduct."



Larry Cultrera, who wrote *Classic Diners of Massachusetts*, published in 2011, is an intrepid traveler who has explored the Garden State many times in search of diner experiences. He relishes the prospect of stepping into a diner for the first time and engaging all its sights, smells, sounds, tastes and new acquaintances. "I love the way you can sit at the counter and meet people. I love listening to the stories they tell. That's the Americana element." Cultrera was on hand in January 1990 when Rosie's Diner (made famous because of the popular Bounty® paper towel TV commercials) was being removed from its nest on the Route 46 circle in Little Ferry and shipped to the hinterlands of Michigan.





Dinner

Diner Architecture Basics

From their earliest days, diners were designed by draftsmen and built by craftsmen. These men of many different trades – carpenters, tile setters, metal workers, painters, cabinet makers, sign builders, plumbers, gas fitters, and electricians – combined their skills to produce a long and enduring tradition of building structures unlike any others.

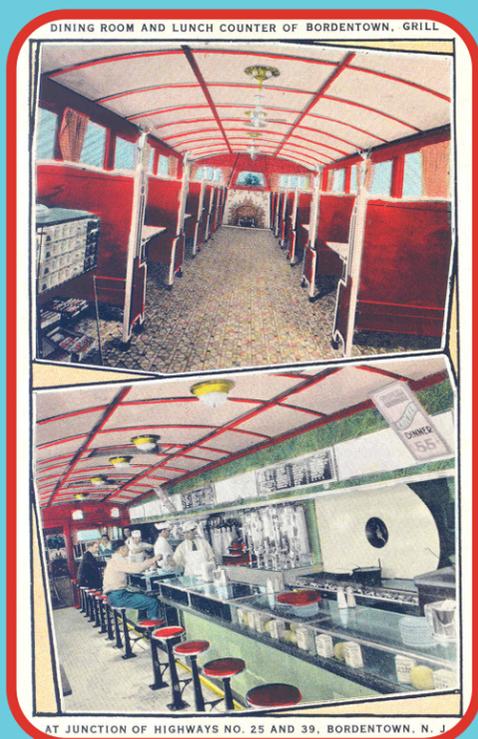
These structures were built in factories to standard proportions, so they could be easily transported to their intended locations. They had to be low enough and narrow enough to travel on roads (a maximum of 17 feet wide) or railroads (no more than 10 feet, 6 inches). The length was determined by the number of seats desired or the size of the property.



The basic design was set and followed by all builders. All of the kitchen equipment and food preparation areas were placed along the back wall: steam tables, burners, griddles, egg cookers, iceboxes, toasters, coffee urns, creamers, and sandwich boards. A counter and stools comprised the rest of the interior on the narrowest models. Sinks for dishwashing were under the counters. A second counter, for use either standing up or with stools, could be added along the front wall. Or, in the widest models, a row of tables or booths filled the space opposite the counter.

On the outside, the diner resembled a railroad car, with either a long row of windows facing the street surmounted by a barrel roof or a monitor-style roofline that had a clerestory with a row of small operable windows. This similarity in appearance has caused a century-long confusion in which diners are often improperly described as “old railroad cars.” Originally, the structure was made entirely of wood.

From Basic to Stainless Steel



Until the mid-1920s, it was very difficult to identify who made a diner, because they were all so similar. Unusual paint schemes and typefaces sometimes “trademarked” a diner to a certain manufacturer. For example, O’Mahony offered bold vertical striping on galvanized steel exteriors that no other builder copied. As new materials were introduced into diners, the craftsmen came into their own with signature designs and flourishes. When Erwin Fedkenheuer, Sr. of Paramount Diners introduced stainless steel trim, it opened up numerous possibilities for diner design.

Stainless steel led the way to the “Golden Age of the Diner.” The material was first used inside to trim windows, doors, iceboxes, cabinets and matching shelves. Decorative hoods with menu boards and other signage became sculpture in the hands of the talented steel benders.





Dinner Specials

On the outside, the look of diners changed forever. The gleaming exteriors, with alternating bands of stainless steel and bright-colored porcelain enamel, were eye-catching to the traveler, especially when articulated with neon and topped with a huge sign. Light transformed the diner interiors. Windows were enlarged and made of clear glass. Mirrors gave the illusion of more space and reflected daylight and headlights, as did the metal, chrome, polished Formica®, ceramic tile, porcelain enamel, marble, and highly varnished wood.



The Beginning of the Modern-Day Diner

By 1950 diners began to outgrow their vehicle look. Manufactured in multiple pieces, they projected a commanding presence with their reflective stainless steel, immense neon signs, and giant plate-glass windows affording an inviting view into the well-lit and bustling interior. Pastel colors – pinks, greens, yellows, blues and grays – defined the look of the decade. The kitchen operated behind closed, swinging doors and much of the counter action of the short-order cook moved out of sight as well. Entire sections were dining rooms filled with booth and table-service only. Ceramic tile walls yielded to Formica® and tile floors gave way to terrazzo.

As diners grew bigger and bigger, the small classic diners were replaced. Others were renovated almost beyond recognition. This was a natural evolution due to the success of the industry. But as they got larger, diners started to lose their sense of identity – the homogeneous yet distinctive qualities that made the buildings unique.

By the end of the 1970s, diners were “rediscovered,” thanks to the work of the artist John Baeder, the photographer Elliott Kaufman, and the historian Richard J.S. Gutman. Two books celebrating diners focused attention on the classic examples of the Golden Age, which were disappearing icons of American culture. Nostalgia swept over a generation of baby boomers who had grown up with diners.

New, classic-looking diners (often seating a minimum of 140 customers) in stainless steel and porcelain enamel with imposing, glass-block towers marking their entrances, began to be built by the major diner makers. The first of a chain of Silver Diners was built in seven sections by Kullman Industries in 1989 and sent to Rockville, Maryland. Elements of this diner’s style and design were imitated by most diner manufacturers.





International Cuisine

The Greek Influence

When diner owners explain how their restaurants came to be, the story often involves journeys from distant shores – Greece is just one example, but an important one. Greek Americans make up a sizable percentage of diner owners in New Jersey, and have written a lasting chapter in the Garden State’s diner narrative. This movement began when a major wave of Greek immigration to the United States occurred between 1880 and 1915. A second wave came in the late 1950s and early 1960s due to political turmoil in the Greek homeland.

Tony Spanakos, an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science and Law at Montclair State University, said that the restaurant business, especially diners, provided a “low barrier of entry” for Greek immigrants to gain a foothold in America. “Greek Americans have done very well in New Jersey,” Spanakos said. “The Greek immigrants came to America prepared to work.” Because of the strong support from family networking and ethnic pride, Greeks soon learned that the diner business offered rewards for those willing to pay their dues. Spanakos added: “The immigrants who came to America were not necessarily business people in Greece. Many lived in small villages. But when they arrived here, they did gain a mentality of owning a business, like a diner. They understood the advantages. They could say it was ‘my’ business. In the 1950s and 1960s, many Greek immigrants (who had limited funds but strong family support) opened diners in New Jersey. They worked hard and they learned the business.”

“The diner business is a Greek success story in New Jersey,” declared Dr. George E. Antoniou, a professor in the Department of Computer Science at Montclair State University. Antoniou was able to support himself and achieve his goal of becoming an electrical engineer and a college professor by working at the Arlington Diner in North Arlington in the mid-1970s. According to his research on the history of Greek immigration to the United States, he said Greeks acquired their own fruit wagons, oyster stands and small restaurants in Lower Manhattan during the early 1890s. This became the proving ground for Greeks who crossed the Hudson River to explore the Jersey diner scene, according to Antoniou. “The Greeks in New Jersey came to the diner business through family connections. The Greek islands, like Karpathos, Chios, Andros, and Cephalonia, are isolated, little communities. Many immigrants who came here didn’t have a formal education, but they were street smart and learned how to adapt in America,” Antoniou said.





International Cuisine

Immigrants Prosper

Greek people have owned diners in New Jersey since the 1950s. With hard work and determination, many were able to buy their own diners, and when their family members came to this country, the new immigrants would work for them. John Sakellaris, owner of the Lyndhurst Diner and Rutt's Hut in Clifton, arrived in the United States in 1961 and began working as a dishwasher in a diner. He said, "In those days, when young Greeks like me came to America, the only place to work was in a diner or restaurant. We could communicate in our own language as we learned English." Like most Greek diner owners, he worked his way up from dishwasher, to busboy, short-order cook, waiter, and finally owner.

Diners were synonymous with Greek families throughout the State, and their reputations grew along with the diner industry. The Greeks say they created a type of restaurant that is open 24/7, allowing anyone to stop in for as long as they want. A Greek American Restaurant Cooperative was created as well as other organizations specifically for Greek owners of restaurants. The Pan Gregorian Enterprises provides a way for owners to negotiate for the best prices and quality for food and supplies.



Under New Management

Operating a diner is difficult because owners work long hours, sometimes 12 or more hours a day every day. Running the business is often a family affair. However, many owners have said their children or grandchildren are not interested in working in diners. Nick Karkambasis, diner owner, stated, "To tell the truth, the parents don't want their children to go into the business. It's a lot of hours, and most of us don't want our children going through what we went through growing up."

With that turn, a new generation of immigrants is picking up and taking over. In recent years many diner owners have come from Central and South America. As with the Greeks, they have worked their way up as well. As Mr. Karkambasis says, "What happened with the Greeks is happening right now with South Americans."

For many it is hard to imagine a diner without some sort of Greek influence or ownership. Many people have memories of the blue-and-white coffee to-go cups with the Parthenon on them. Greek people and diners will forever go together.





Dessert

Diner Food

How many times have you asked your family or friends what they want to eat and they all wanted something completely different? One of the easiest ways to resolve the issue is to say, "Let's go to the diner." The variety of foods at most diners, especially those with a Greek or Italian influence to their menus, is great enough to satisfy all groups, especially those looking to get a generous portion at a good price.

Another advantage to diner food is its availability. If you're out at 2 a.m. and craving disco fries or pancakes, where are you going to go? In the Jersey area, all you have to do is drive along any major highway until you find a diner.



The First Diner Foods

When diners started as lunch wagons for those who worked third shift, the meals were simple and reflected the time period. It was workingman's food. The offerings were items that were handheld and could be eaten on the go. Some typical foodstuffs were sandwiches, eggs, pies and coffee.

Walter Scott, creator of the diner, made the food at home to be sold in his wagon because there was no kitchen inside the original version. As a way of economizing, Scott created the "chewed sandwich," which hardly sounds appetizing, but was similar to what we would call a pulled sandwich. It consisted of fragments of meat chopped and placed between sliced home-baked bread with mustard or butter. It was simple, easy and filling. Meals were reasonably priced, and for 5 cents, a customer had the choice of a ham sandwich, a boiled egg and buttered bread, or a large piece of pie. For those who wanted to splurge, Scott sold sliced chicken for 30 cents.

New Customers

Originally the diner was a place for working men to grab a bite to eat while on their lunch or dinner breaks, and likely diners did not have much to offer women, between their selections and the rough clientele. The 1920s saw all of that change due to an increase in casual dining in the country.

Diner owners sought to attract women as customers and change their restaurants' reputations as "greasy spoons," where men in dirty clothes used foul language. They changed the décor, kept the facility clean, and some even added plants. Signs saying "Booths for Ladies" and adding "Miss" to establishments' names helped attract a new female demographic.

When women began frequenting diners they brought their families with them, and the family diner was born. Adding women and children as patrons also brought changes to menus.





Lighter Fare

Blue-Plate Specials

As the 20th century advanced, the style of dining did as well. Patrons enjoyed old-fashioned family favorites such as chipped beef, turkey and croquettes, and liver and onions in the mid-20th century. Diner owners could set their own menus while keeping the staples that everyone loved to eat in any diner. There was no corporate overhead or anyone dictating what to serve.

Nearly everyone has heard of and eaten the blue-plate special, which began in diners during the 1930s. The term “blue-plate special” was named after the partitioned blue plates made by dishware suppliers. It was perfect for customers during those difficult economic times. The owners could use the divided plates to serve filling meals at an economical price.

Each diner could take advantage of regional specialties, and this ensured a unique experience at each restaurant. Even in the state of New Jersey there are differences in what is eaten from one region to the next. The 1950s saw diner menus grow and become the sizeable ones we see today. The new expansive menus meant short-order cooks were no longer sufficient, and proper chefs were hired to take their places. Multiple items had to be stocked, but storage was made easier with the introduction of frozen foods.

Diners stayed open 24 hours a day, and despite the increasing appeal of fast-food during the 1950s and 1960s, people from all walks of life still ate at their local diner. In a time when being open 24/7 was not common, diners accommodated those who were out late at night. People went to diners for more than food. Sometimes they would talk with other regular patrons, or just sit back and watch the people and events of the day. For some, diners are a way of life, and not just a place to eat. Ethnic dishes from Italian and Greek cuisines might be available on menus, depending on the area or the background of the chefs and owners. For some patrons, this may have been the first time they had ever tasted anything other than American-style meat, vegetables and potatoes.

Waning Years

The latter part of the 20th century saw the decline of diners partly because of the availability of fast food and the number of chain restaurants that proliferated across the country. Most food once exclusive to diners could be found just about anywhere else. The classic diners of the early- to mid-20th century were disappearing and many were replaced by modern-style diners with less stainless steel and neon and more of a casual dining restaurant feel. Tastes changed, and the use of frozen or instant food was not what people wanted.

Resurgence

The 21st century has seen an interest in all things “classic,” including diners. Menus have changed again with the times. While classics such as chipped beef or liver and onions can still be found on many menus, other items have been added to reflect the current culture. Modern staples, such as burgers, pancakes and chicken soup, are there. However, healthier options abound and foods from many more ethnicities can be found on today’s diner menus. Some diners are even “upscale” and serve modern cuisine for the more discerning customers.

The American diner and its cuisine have evolved throughout the decades. It has gone from serving simple meals to working men to feeding people from all walks of life. The variety and changing nature of the diner menu ensures that this style of dining will continue to appeal to everyone.





Late Night Favorites

Where Are They Now

When the Excellent Diner in Westfield closed in 1995, it didn't go to the scrap heap; rather, it was sold to a European businessman who shipped it to Germany. On August 25, 1995 *The Star-Ledger* printed a photo of the diner being towed by tractor-trailer to Port Elizabeth. The story ("Farewell to Diner; Westfield Eatery Gets New Life in Germany") explained that the Excellent was being transported by container ship to Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, eventually to be taken by ferry on the Rhine River to Aalen, Germany.

More than 10 years after the diner left town, on January 12, 2006, *The Westfield Leader* reported that the Excellent Diner was serving all-American cuisine to European customers. The diner did land in Aalen, but then it was relocated to a nearby German town named Wasserlassen until it was sold to Disneyland Paris. The Excellent was renamed Café des Cascadeurs ("Café of the Stuntmen") and opened on March 16, 2002.



Clarksville Diner

In his book, *The History of Diners in New Jersey*, Michael Gabriele mentioned an August 27, 1995 article in *The Star-Ledger*, which reported that over the years, several New Jersey diners have been uprooted and shipped to Europe. For example, the Beach Haven Diner went to Barcelona, Spain, in 1992, while Ted's Plaza Diner in Jersey City, near the Holland Tunnel, and the Gateway Diner from Phillipsburg, both landed in London.

One establishment that made a circuitous route to Europe was the Clarksville Diner. This eatery began as a 1940 Silk City car known as the Princeton Grill, which was located on Route 1 in Lawrenceville. Author Richard J. S. Gutman said that in March 1988, Gordon C. Tindall purchased the Clarksville, which had been slated for demolition, for \$3,000 and moved it to Decorah, Iowa.

The Associated Press reported that Tindall, originally from West Windsor, had relocated to the Midwest and developed a passion for vintage diners. He also had an interest in opening his own restaurant: "Tindall returned to the Northeast a few months ago to look for a diner to bring back to Iowa," the article stated. "He spotted the [old Princeton Grill], which he remembers as a child." Tindall recalled sentimental attachments: "It used to be a hangout for my dad." Tindall continued: "[Diners] are a vanishing piece of architecture. To have the opportunity to save one is real gratifying." According to the article, the diner was loaded onto a flatbed trailer, and on April 22, 1988, was made ready for its 1,000-mile journey to Iowa.

Tindall spent four years restoring the diner and was then the proprietor for five years. An online article posted by Iowa Historical Places stated that the Clarksville Diner received certification from the National Park Service as a national historic site (Reference No. 93001356). The diner was eventually sold to a television executive from France. The Clarksville Diner left Iowa on October 19, 1998. It returned briefly to New Jersey, passing through the state on its way to Port Elizabeth. The diner was then shipped to Antwerp, Belgium, and eventually made its way to the headquarters of Canal Jimmy in Boulogne-Billancourt, on the western edge of Paris. The diner is not open to the public and is used mainly for private events and receptions.





Extras and Side Dishes

Educational Materials

The CD below contains your “side dishes” or “extras” to help enhance your dining experience. As a thank you for visiting the exhibit, it provides you with additional materials that you can share with your students at your leisure. The CD includes images found in the exhibit, and additional ones of both diners, food and floor-plans. We hope that you and your students will find them helpful as you delve deeper into the subject back in your classrooms.

The diner experience in New Jersey doesn't lend itself to merely one discipline or field of study. It crosses the spectrum of Core Standards: Social Studies, Sociology, History, New Jersey History and Math among them. So as you use the information and images on this CD, be creative.

- Have your students order food in their native languages
- Gather menus from local diners and develop a math exercise. Have them order food and pay for it figuring how much change they will get back, and leaving different percentages for tip
- Have them use art skills: create menus or design their own diner diorama
- Have students study the floor plans comparing them with diners they may have eaten in. Use the plans to create their own diner layout making changes where they think they might be warranted
- Invite a diner owner to your classroom to discuss how he or she got started, where they are from or if it is a family business
- Solicit the help of the food services in your school to create a diner menu or have diner-like treats prepared and served at a party

Have fun. We hope you and your students enjoyed your visit and if you do something creative in your classroom that goes over really well, share it with us. We'd love to be invited to come take part, and we'd especially love to see photos. We hope to see you again in the future.





Credits



Middlesex County Cultural & Heritage Commission

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Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Kenneth Armwood, *Liaison to the Commission*
Charles Kenny
H. James Polos
Charles E. Tomaro
Blanquita B. Valenti
John A. Pulomena, *County Administrator*
Kathaleen R. Shaw, *Department Head,
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Funding

Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission
Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
New Jersey Historical Commission,
a Division of the Department of State

Lenders

Passaic County Historical Society, Michael Gabriele,
Culinary Arts Museum at Johnson and Wales University,
Mark Oberndorf, Larry Cultrera, Tom Smith,
The Paterson Museum

Guest Curators

Michael Gabriele, Richard Gutman

