

The

Great Lakes Dining Car WAGONEER



Continuing to tell the story of the lunch wagon and dining car business that prospered in the Great Lakes region.

With focus on the Great Lakes and neighboring states, and extra emphasis on Chautauqua County in New York.

CONTENTS

Goodell Diner Restoration - 3
↳ Gordon Tindall now has the reigns and is making great progress.
Focus on a Manufacturer - 4
↳ Smaller concerns.
New York Diners the book - 5
↳ Information about the latest diner book.
List of Manufacturers - 2, 6
↳ The builders of the lunch cars.
Discovered on-line - 7
↳ From EBAY and other on-line "collections".
www.NYDiners.com/history.html - 8
↳ What's on the web-site and what's upcoming.
Great Lakes Diner Book - Project - 8
↳ Information on the project being contemplated.

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Dining Car Manufacturers

Ward & Dickinson Dining Car Co. - Silver Creek, NY 1925-1938. The most prolific builder of the region. They started in mid 1924 building lunch cars in the open, and became a company in 1925. Their motto was, "They're built to last." Charles Ward left the company in late 1927. They would later start building double diners, which was one diner attached to another diner, length wise,

Closson Lunch Wagon Co. - Glens Falls, NY 1902-1912. Westfield, NY 1912-1917? The first known builder of the region. Albert Closson had his design patented in 1905. The lunch wagons had monitor roofs and tables for two inside the wagons. The lunch wagons were possibly the first to be wired for electricity.

Sorge - Built Ward like diners in Silver Creek, NY in the late 1940's. The interiors had ceilings made of stainless steel. They also advertised that they remodeled existing diners.

Valentine - Diners built in Wichita, Kansas from the late 1930s to the mid 1970s. These porcelain buildings were typically made with 8 to 12 stools and everything you would need for a one or two man show. Find a more complete history of the company on the Kansas State Historical Society's site.

<http://www.kshs.org/diners/>

Goodell Diner - Towanda, Pennsylvania

We just have to keep you updated on Gordon's excellent progress on the Yellow Rose.

You can still keep up with the latest saga of the diner by going to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and typing in "Yellow Rose Diner" in the search engine, or checking out [redrosediner.com](https://www.redrosediner.com) which has stories and pictures about the diners of Gordon's lives. As you can tell, this Goodell diner is not the first diner Gordon Tindall has restored, but hopefully, it will be his best!



Diner moving to Lanesboro, Minnesota

Gordon has found a location for the diner in the small village of Lanesboro in Minnesota. The diner will also now be known as the Spud Boy Lunch. So what has Gordon done this year with the diner? Here is a recap of what happened since the last Wagoneer.



- A new rubber roof
- Gordon needed to use the wainscoting from the counter to help make up for the missing pieces from the roof and the walls. But the counter is now in, and he has bought marble to be used for the countertop.
- Gordon hired a retired sign painter from New Jersey who now lives in the Towanda area who is just as old as the diner! The gentleman painted the signs and name on the side of the diner.
- Gordon has had new windows made for the diner which are nearly identical to the original windows. He is using wood sashes.
- For a back bar, Gordon is using black and white tiles.

History of this Goodell diner:

In June of 1927, the Wellington Enterprise mentioned that a lunch car was coming to town, next to L. G. Bradstock's newest gas depot. The newspaper also states that the diner received a fresh coat of paint within a month of arriving in town, which coincided with one gentleman's recollection that the diner was set up in another location before coming to Wellington. At this time, Goodell was selling diners for \$4,750 stating they were "built of the best" and "latest equipment and fully complete." Frank Andrews was the first operated the diner and was the day cook. Flower boxes were shortly added as well as a night cook by the name of Perry Knapp. Many cooks came in to work the night shift, but Carl Ensign would work the night shift in 1928 and later come back to buy the diner. Van & Bessie Barbor owned the dining car in 1930 when it was held up. The diner would later be known as Carl's Diner, Village Diner and lastly Cecil's Trackside Diner.

Another Wellington Mystery from the Wellington Enterprise.

March 11, 1929 - DINING CAR COMING FOR CAMP GROUNDS

"A modern dining car has been ordered and will be placed two and one half miles east of town on the lot of ex-Mayor Charles Ed Gott, where he owns and operates a filling station and camping grounds.

The station is fast growing in popularity with tourists and the addition of the car will make the camp complete. The car is expected this week."

Harry Richardson : 1927-1935

With this issue of the Great Lakes Dining Car Wagoneer, we begin to look at some of the minor players who still held an important role in the building of diners. Harry Richardson may have been a distant relative of Earl Richardson. This Richardson did go out to Dayton for a short time to help get Raymond started, but is mostly known for working with Ward and Dickinson. Much of what I have gleaned about Harry Richardson comes from either the Silver Creek newspapers or Eric Richardson, Harry's grandson.

Eric reported to me that Harry was an excellent carpenter and helped his distant cousin Raymond Richardson get the Rich Dining Car Company off the ground when they moved to Dayton, Ohio in 1926. Harry did not stay out there for long, as his family was still in Silver Creek. Back in town, he would work for Ward and Dickinson when extra help was needed and even went to Florida to build houses for the Dickinson family. In the 1930s, he went on location to places like Elmira and Cincinnati to help put the finishing touches on Ward diners. This was during the Great Depression, and Eric stated that his grandfather did whatever was necessary to keep food on the plate.

One of the most interesting blurbs came out of 1940 when the Dunkirk Observer reported that Harry and his son Franklin were going to Geneva to build a diner/restaurant for a customer. It's presumed that the paper meant Geneva, New York. Research in that town found that Bush's Diner in downtown actually moved down the street around 1940, so we are now under the assumption that Harry and Franklin built the new Bush's Diner in Geneva.

Ward & Dickinson Research

A great by chance find came out of the University of Indiana at Chicago's archives. In 1933-4 the city hosted the Century of Progress exposition, and the library was able to acquire their correspondence files. In this files, which contained over 300 boxes, was some 20 plus pages from the Ward & Dickinson Dining Car Company.

Some of the collection includes correspondence between the Century of Progress management and Harold Kirtz, Assistant to the President from 1930 and 1931. Mr. Kirtz was inquiring about Ward & Dickinson either running the concessions with their dining cars, or having the company awarded the concessions contract use some dining cars to aid in their concessions. President Foster Parmelee wrote the last correspondence "in the absence of Mr. Kirtz" in late 1931 stating that he had buyers who would purchase the dining cars after the fair was done and that the number of dining cars needed for the fair would take more than a year to build. It does seem, at this point, that nothing materialized after this point in time.

Ward & Dickinson sent the exposition people six pictures showing their "Club Diner" model, including pictures that have never been seen before. They also included a drawing of the interior and exterior layout of the Club Diner.

Also included was an article written by the National Petroleum News on Sept 2, 1931, "Gasoline-Food Combination Watched As New One-Stop Service." The article discussed the B-G Dining Car placed in Hyde Park, Illinois at a Standard Oil of Indiana station. This was big news, as a chain of restaurants used a diner as their means of catering to tourists, located at a chain gasoline station. The article also talked up the dining car at the Kendall Station outside of Silver Creek, and how this concept might catch on. One interesting fact was the talk of "new arterial highways taking the traveling public away from the cities."

The last item in the folder was a booklet titled, "Feeding the Traveling Public." This booklet gave a lot of background on the company's push for downtown hotel and restaurant operators to open up edge of town dining cars in conjunction with their downtown business in order to stay up with the new trend of car travel, and to promote their downtown businesses from the road. The booklet shows "Dining Car Number Four," operated by the Pace Restaurant Corp. of Chicago, which seems to imply that the Pace company bought four Ward & Dickinson diners!

Diners of New York

by Michael Engle and Mario & Lucille Monti

Editorial Note : The author of this newsletter and the book are one in the same.

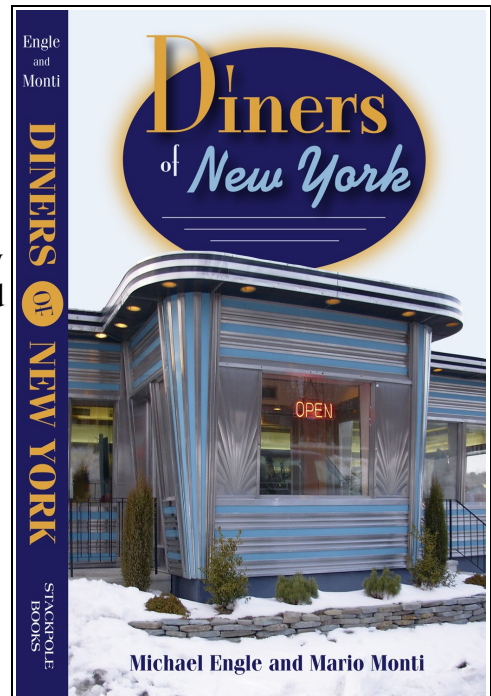
Diners of New York is the third in a series of books published by Stackpole Books. They have put out Diners of Pennsylvania and New England and next plan to publish a book on New Jersey Diners.

The goal of this book is to be part travel guide for people interested in visiting the diners that are located all across New York state, from Long Island to the Lake Erie region. The other part tells the history of and unique stories of diners past and present in the state.

Split up into regions, each region also features some fantastic diners at the end of each chapter. For example, the book takes a peek in diners like the Historic Village Diner in Red Hook, the Miss Port Henry Diner, which is now known as Bev's Place and the Miss Albany Diner. In western New York, we look at the Penn Yan Diner, the Highland Park Diner in Rochester and the Lake Effect Diner in Buffalo.

For more info about the book on the internet.

www.nydiners.com/dbook/nydinerbook.php



Co-author Mario Monti grew up in Brooklyn and taught in Brooklyn and western Long Island his entire career. He met his wife Lucille while in college. After retirement, they rediscovered diners, and together went out searching for

diners past and present, focusing on downstate New York. They became the leading authorities on diners around New York City and even gave slide show presentations on the history of the diner in metro New York and the progression that the exteriors and interiors of diners have taken over the years.

WEBSITE - The diner also has an accompanying website specifically for the book. The website nydiners.com also deals with the history of diners past and present in New York state, but the book specific website will deal with any changes that relate to the diners found in the book. The page will have a list of changed diners and a place for users to submit mistakes and changes that they have found. Also included on the book's website are a few stories that are being presented as extras to the book. Currently you can find stories about McGrath's Diner that once was in Pawling, a case study of Newburgh's diners and a peek into the history of the Adirondack lunch wagon and diner history.

Kent Diner saved!

Mike Zenone of North Olmstead, Ohio has saved the Kent Diner, which faced demolition. The Kent Diner which was once known as the Buckeye Diner and Jerry's Diner was to be torn down in order to reclaim the property for new development. Mike Zenone paid \$50 in order to salvage this 1930's O'Mahony diner that first operated in Cleveland and moved to Kent sometime before 1946 and settled at 205 South Water Street. Around 1950, the diner suffered a bad fire that charred some of the ceiling and much of the back bar of the diner. At this time, a stucco styled ceiling was placed over the wood wainscoting of the ceiling. The back wall also lost much of its integrity at this time. To make matters worse, the back building was built so as to put its weight on the back wall of the diner. These factors did not allow Mr. Zenone to take the diner out in one piece.

Dining Car Manufacturers (continued from page 2)

Rich Dining Car Company - Silver Creek, NY 1921-1926. Dayton, Oh 1926-1929. Earl Richardson came from Westfield, NY in 1909 and ran a lunch wagon until he started building them as a business. His son Raymond took over the business in 1925 after Earl's death.

Liberty Dining Car Co. - Clarence, NY 1928-1930? Owned by Charles A. Ward, who was previous part owner of W&D. The company had offices in Buffalo, NY.

Silver Creek Dining Car Co. / National Dining Car Co. - Silver Creek, NY 1923-31+ First ran by a Dr. Fitzpatrick, later by a Dr. J. J. Sharp who changed to the National name. National built barrel roofed diners.

Orleans - Albion, NY 1940's Built 3 diners, one being the Highland Park in Rochester, NY.

Rochester Grills - Rochester, NY 1936-1939+ Like Bixler, they built diners that were pieced together on site.

Mulholland - Dunkirk, NY 1925-1931+ Probably the first company to add metal to their diners in the Lake Erie region. They previously built car bodies and horse drawn vehicles.

Bixler - Fremont & Norwalk, Oh. Late 1920's-1935 The first company to build diners that were assembled in 4 ft sections.

Goodell - The Goodell Hardware store in Silver Creek, NY also built dining cars starting in 1926.

Guy E. Russell - Ripley, NY 1929. He is listed in the 1930 census as a "diner builder".

Peter Schneider - Gowanda or Silver Creek, NY ? Only one blurb in the newspaper mentions him building a dining car in 1922 in Gowanda.

G. C. Kuhlman Car Co. - A Cleveland, Oh. interest. They built diners for Brill. Brill had plants in Springfield, MA and St. Louis, MO.

Dag-wood Diner - Toledo, Oh., late 1940's Made kits called Dag-Wood Diners that were boxy rectangular diners. Rumor has it that they only made half a dozen kits.

General Diners - Built sectional diners in Oswego, NY in 1939-1940. Diners were installed on location in hours. In 1942, they tried again in Syracuse.

Ellis Omnibus and Cab Co. - Made at least one lunch wagon in Cortland, NY in 1896.

Guedelhofer Wagon Co. - Built at least one lunch car in 1910, in Indianapolis, IN.

Classic Diners - Lansing, MI. Stainless steel diners built around 2005-2007.

Recently rediscovered information.

The diner built by Starlite which was first located in St. Henry, Ohio and last saw business as an auto dealership office is now in Manhiem Township of Pennsylvania, just south of Pottsville.

Matchbooks-Postcards:

York Diner outside of York, PA was a Ward & Dickinson double wide diner.

Ward & Dickinson News

Mike Zenone let me know about a picture on www.kentohiohistory.org of a Ward and Dickinson Diner. The diner looks like it has a slightly different configuration but I think that is because of the angle of the picture. The diner was known as Dick's Diner at the time and the city directories has the first owner as J.L. Bastedo in 1932.

Western Pennsylvania Diners

There were two diners in Greenville, a 1924 Richardson and a Ward & Dickinson. The diner in Corry was a Mulholland. As stated elsewhere, the old diner from Mercer went to West Middlesex. Meadville had a Closson lunch wagon, two Ward & Dickinsons, an unknown diner at 886 Water and the Parkway Diner which was probably a stainless steel diner. There was also a diner rumored to be just south of town in Cochran. Greensburg had a diner at 10 East Pittsburg, which was first called the Majestic Diner and shortly afterward the Bob's Restaurant. Covington, a small borough south of Mansfield on US Rt 15 had a Liberty dining car. North of Mansfield by the New York border is Lawrenceville, they also had a dining car in the 1930s, but by the time it was photographed in the 1950s, the building the diner was in was a generic stick built building.

Sanborne possibilities - Port Allegany possibly had a diner at 25 South Main in 1940. Zelienople had a diner at 111 North Main in 1942 but not in 1931. Albion had a diner at 85 East State in 1935. We also still need to find out about Coudersport's old diner.

New Manufacturer – For years, people have seen the postcard of an odd barrel roofed diner that once stood in Clarion called the Park Diner. We all thought it was a one of a kind diner. Well now, on this website: www.keystonehighways.com/us6linesville.html We have found a picture of a similar diner. This leads many of us to believe that a small manufacturing concern may have taken place.

Blurbs: *(Can you give us some information on these places?)*

A 1955 newspaper advertisement in a Massena, NY newspaper said that diner frames could be bought from Matthew O'Brien of 2 Nelson Street in Auburn, NY.

There is a possibility of a "green and white" diner going to Sunbury, PA in 1928-9.

Massena - Larry Cultrera let me know that the Flying Saucer Diner in Massena is probably a Worcester Lunch Car. I have not been able to get an address for this diner. Blurbs from the local paper – Travelers Lunch on Andrews mentioned. Guy's Diner was at intersection at Depot and Main. Miss Massena Diner was damaged by fire in 1931. Riverside Lunch Car on Center St. Bombay had a lunch cart in the 1930s. There was a diner located at Massena Springs.

Illinois – Continued to go through the Sanborne maps of Illinois this fall. As expected the diners are few and far between. The plans are for this summer to visit Illinois and do some research in some of the medium sized cities.

Indiana – Ball State University had a picture of the Pixie Diner(Mountain View) in their Archives.

www.nydiners.com/history.html

Lists:

From Sanborne Maps – Indiana and Ohio
User created list of diners once in Ohio.
City directory databases searchable by city or by name. Over 50 cities available.

Michigan Pages:

www.nydiners.com/Michigan/michigan6.html

Lists of past and present diners by region.
Photos of current diners in the state
Roadside related links for the state.

The Ohio diner pages at nydiners.com are now open.
Point your browser to :
www.nydiners.com/ohio/ohiomain.html

2009 Website Plans

- Improve list of Ward & Dickinson diners, add to list of first 100 diners with info on their other known diners.
 - Continue to update various pages.
- Utica diners in depth, similar to the Capital District in depth pages.

2009 Research Plans

- Buffalo, NY – continue city directory work, check into building permits
- Erie, PA - continue city directory and check if building permits are available.
- Research in Indiana and Illinois as possible.

About this Newsletter:

This newsletter is created yearly by Michael Engle as a chance to update interested parties about any recent discoveries and news about the former forgotten diner industry dotted around the Great Lakes region. It is my hope that this newsletter will find its way into the hands of historians and historical societies who can share their local knowledge, and to remind them of the social importance diners played in their respective communities.

Project - Great Lakes Diner Book - Project

Idea:

Richard Gutman's book, "American Diner – Then and Now" is the ultimate authority on diners. But still, it barely touches the minor but significant history of the lunch wagon and diner in the Great Lakes states. A combination of builders and owners made the lunch wagon and diner an important social aspect of a majority of communities throughout the region from the 1910s to the 1960s. While there is a great amount of history lost, the good news is that there are still diners out there today in the Great Lakes.

I see this book almost as an addendum to Mr. Gutman's book, an important document in the history of diners.

How you can help:

I have a good deal of information, but any picture, story or recollection can only add to the whole picture. Plus, you get to see your communities' diner in writing. Think of all the residents whose daily lives revolved around partaking of a meal with their second family at the diner.

If you have information, or are just curious to how it is progressing, please write to:

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or

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