Great Lakes Dining Car WAGONEE R



2009 Year in Review

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.

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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. The company built similar looking diners with monitor roofs and green and white swirled stained glass in the upper sashes of their windows.

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/

Spud Boy Lunch moved to Lanesboro, Minnesota

Work continues for a hopeful Spring 2010 opening of the 1927 Goodell Diner now known as the Spud Boy Lunch. Gordon Tindall has placed the diner on a concrete pad and has a nice walkway built. He continues to work on finishing up the interior and the vintage equipment. When the diner does open, it will be closed in the winter as Lanesboro is more of a tourist community.

Chuck Wagon Diner - Now in Princetown, NY

The Chuck Wagon Diner has made a trip from its original location at the northwest corner of Springfield and Neil streets in Champaign to Princetown, NY with a few stops in between. In between the diner made moves to Villa Grove and Urbana before being sold to a businessman in metro Detroit. After the plans in Michigan fell through, Tom Ketchum came onto the scene and fought through a multitude of setbacks to get the Mountain View diner to upstate New York.



Original owner Bob and Nixie Dye started out with a small lunch car in Valparaiso, Indiana. "A turning point came when Dye and his wife decided to visit a diner in Gary also called the Chuck Wagon. It was the first Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise in Indiana." [side note - It was found out this year that the Gary diner was recently torn down.] Dye decided to open his own Chuck Wagon diner in Champaign, Illinois and had a similar neon sign for his Chuck Wagon Diner. Dye's diner also became the first Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise in Illinois.

In 1976, a University of Illinois senior Gale Weatherby decided to buy the sign for \$80 when she heard it was for sale. Bob Dye was selling "her favorite off-campus hangout," and she had to have the sign. Everything came full circle when she posted pictures of the neon sign on Flickr and they were seen by a friend of Tom Ketchum. Gale was more than thrilled to see the sign going back to where it really belongs, right above the Chuck Wagon Diner. Tom Ketchum had the sign restored by an Albany, NY firm and now the sign stands as a beacon above the Chuck Wagon Diner waiting for the day when it will start to beckon a new set of customers.

Avoca, NY - The Avoca Diner, a 1948 Silk City diner has been moved to Washington D.C. The new owners hope to open up the diner early in 2010. In New York state, the diner was hooked up to a caboose that was sold a year or more before the diner.

Nancy's Main Street Diner in Grafton, Ohio - The former Big Dig Diner from Boston, MA. This was the first diner that Steve Harwin of Cleveland restored. The diner came from Ono, PA. Harwin sent the diner to Boston, and later reacquired it when it did not last in Boston. Owner Denise Shutek has attached the diner to a already standing building and uses the diner as additional seating.

White Crystal Diner in Canton, Michigan - Alex Altier has

purchased the White Crystal Diner from Steve Harwin and intends to open it on Michigan Avenue in Canton, MI. The White Crystal is a more square shaped diner than most, and contains only stools, similar to Valentine diners. The diner was originally intended for Springfield, Massachusetts until permits for the move were denied.

Butler Manufacturing - Band Box Diners

Butler Manufacturing started with grain silo manufacturing and then moved onto naval housing before World War II. Today, they are known for building many types of metal buildings. But around 1940 (One document credits the building to 1929), they got into the portable restaurant business. In their brochures, they called these buildings, "Boulevard Sandwich Shops." Many of these buildings looked like the 1950s boxy gasoline stations, but with more windows, similar to the White Tower buildings, but with less flair. Steel walls and ceilings, usually covered porcelain enamel, made them easy to clean. A typical sandwich shop would only have stools for the customers. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul, Butler would build 14 portable restaurants that would be known as "Band Box Diners." Today, only one remains at 729 South 10th Street in Minneapolis.

Indian Trailer Corporation

Harry Bartholomew was one of the first mobile home builders in the Chicago area. A portable restaurant called the "Dineola" was offered by the company. The Dineola was a trailer with a hitch in front. The vehicle included a small kitchen and refrigerators for ice cream and stools for customers. This was everythig needed to run a small restaurant on wheels. A Patent was placed on this design, numbered PAT0619A1.



Steel King

Steel King is located in Wisconsin. From their website, "Since 1926, Steel King Construction has strived to meet the needs of retail petroleum, commercial, and industrial businesses by providing the finest materials and expert craftsmanship, coupled with an acute attention to individual customer needs." In 1929, owner Walter Junkerman expanded his business to include roadside stands besides other portable buildings. In the 1940s, as they were building many porcelain enamel gas stations, they also built at least one hamburger restaurant similar to White Towers and White Castles of the time.

For a photo, please see - http://www.kingmfg.com/showpic.cfm?passid=68&t=h

Dag-Wood Diners

This company was located in Toledo, Ohio. They made the kit that became the Fleetwood Diner in Ann Arbor, MI in 1949. They also made a diner that went to Erie, MI that has now been remodeled beyond recognition. The company was listed in the 1948 city directory, but not the 1945 or the 1950. Albert C. DeCatur was the president, and also ran Active Business Brokers, a real estate firm. George H. Burrows, of Cleveland, was the vice-president, Jason A. Coughlin was the secretary. He also ran James A. Coughlin Inc., "Creators & designers of bar fixtures of distinction, a complete service, bars, back racks, ...". Clarence E. Ghent was the treasurer. They shared an office with Active Business Brokers in the Security Building at 245 Huron St, room 313. One former owner of a Dag-Wood diner mentioned that no more than half a dozen were made, though this has not been verified. Four locations for Dag-Wood Diners have been verified, and a fifth has been rumored in the thumb of Michigan.

Ward & Dickinson News

I received a letter from Kathryn Kofoed Loughheed, the daughter of Donald Kofoed. Donald's father, Berthel(Bert) was the factory superintendent for essentially all of Ward & Dickinson's existence. Donald wrote his memoirs in 1991 and included a few pages on the Ward & Dickinson Dining Car Company. While not all of the information is believed to be correct, as it is written 60 years after the fact, one would hope that the majority of the information will be an invaluable asset to studying the history of the company.

Donald started out handling time cards and acting as the pay master. "My first job was to set up and operate a perpetual stock inventory and accounting system." Donald stayed with Ward & Dickinson for two years, working a 40 hour work week and earning \$35 a week. Because he worked at the company for two years, and his father was basically in charge of building the diners, Donald gained an invaluable insight into the company. Some of the more interesting facts learned include:

- Berthel Kofoed was asked to design and build the first diner for Charles Ward & Lee Dickinson.
- "The metal number plate is under the bread drawer in the back bar."
- Pittsburgh Paints make specific paints for Ward & Dickinson to meet the needs of a small building with the cooking and heat effecting typical paints.
- Fir timbers 4" x 6" 40 foot long were shipped from Tacoma, Washington by boat through the Panama Canal.
- "While setting up a dining car in Houston, Texas, [Berthel] turning on the sulfur dioxide liquid refrigerant, the valve came off and the liquid SO₂ squirted in his face. To avoid losing the SO₂ and delay the scheduled opening of the diner, he fumbled with the valve, replaced it and completed the set up for regular opening." The Houston doctor "didn't know better and just gave him a sedative." Berthel started driving home and made it as far as Erie, Pennsylvania before he had to stop.
- Nick's Best Diner in Greenville, SC used a drawing of a Ward & Dickinson on their matchbooks for some time. A picture of the diner has been found in the city's historical society which shows the diner to be a barrel roof diner.
- A Falconer, NY picture from 1929 shows a Ward & Dickinson diner on Main Street.
- The double unit Ward diner in East Bradford, PA is being used as a contractor's office.
- **Next Year** we will look at the progression of Ward & Dickinson diners. We will show you the differences between the first year's model, the new and improved Ward Dining Car and the deluxe models that later became the norm for new diners built by the company.

Port Clinton, Ohio - The diner(s) housed at the Erie-Ottawa Airport have reappeared. Edward G. Patrick Jr. has received the go ahead to place the diner(s) at the intersection of State route 269 and Port Clinton Eastern Road. Shown here are the two diners, with one being in two sections (the diner in the middle and the diner on the left with its non stainless part facing the camera.) Photo is from 2000. The Eddie's Diner project failed to happen and the diners went into storage at the airport.



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.

Matchbooks-Postcards:

Edyoungs.com has a picture of the Club Diner in Williamsville, NY. The diner shows a barrel roof diner with not much curve.

Ward & Dickinson News

Diner #21 that went to Niagara Falls is the first diner known to have the "o" inserted in diner. Even more, they called themselves a "dynor." The name did not seem to stick after this ad was placed in the Gazette.

The 1927 Ward & Dickinson in Fredonia, NY was moved to Kimball Stand, NY in 1952.

Announcing the Opening on Saturday, February 13th, of "The Niagara Dynor"

The Dining Car Situated at the Corner of Main St. and Willow Ave.

Breakfast, Lunches, Dinners

Open Day and Night—Hot Meals All the Time

Service for Ladies and Gentlemen

Niagara Gazette 2/12/26

In the St. Petersburg Times, Mr William Dickinson advertised that he was setting up a "syndicate" of five Ward & Dickinson Dining Cars in 1926. "Units now being sold."

Mrs. Florence Gingras's lunch car #61 at Oliver & Robinson St. was mentioned in December of 1927 of the Niagara Falls Gazette. She was said to be living in the town of Wheatfield at the time an assessment issue was brought up against the Fireman's house where the lunch car was renting space. Car #20 that he husband bought for Tonawanda still remains unaccounted for.

A photo has been found of Car #84 that ended up in Wellsville, NY.

Car #27 that went from Seneca Falls to Buffalo to Bridgeport, CT and then sold to Howard Hovey has been found to have went to Columbia, PA.

Johnstown, NY diner known as the New Palace Diner owned by a L.A. Martin of Watertown came to town in January 1927. The tractor employed to move the diner from the railroad tracks in Fonda broke down on Fonda hill, causing a stir. The diner opened up at 6am on Feb 8, 1927.

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

A reader mentioned that the Sterling Diner in Pittsford, NY was a Silk City Diner. The Fairport Herald Mail in late 1955 had a picture of this two piece diner in their paper. "Nearing completion on Fairport Road between Huff Pontiac and Steffan's Sunnyside Greenhouses, is the only stainless steel diner in this area, according to owner and proprietor, Ted King."

Charles Heinz was a representative for Valentine diners in Ithaca, NY - 1959 Binghamton Press

Niagara Falls -

There was a Valentine initially called the Town House Diner. It seems the diner needed to move due to a highway project. It was bought by John A. Juron in 1969. The diner was listed as being 10' by 25'. We are currently unsure what happened to the diner.

There was also a stainless steel diner at 2716 Pine starting in 1949 and was owned by Mrs. Francis E. Marchese.

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147 BROADWAY
BUFFALO, N. Y.
PHONE MOHAWK, 4562

6-30-57 Binghamton Press

We would love to learn more about the Empire Diners Corp. An "Empire Diner" was sent to State College, PA and we are wondering if this diner was part of the aforementioned chain.

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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