

Order's Up!

Paterson and the Rise of the New Jersey Diner

Is there any type of dining experience quite as American as a Diner? Eating in a diner is an experience to which most of us can relate. The thought of a diner invokes a specific image in our minds: friendly people, hearty and inexpensive meals with quick service. The physical diner building also reflects a unique style, with neon signs combined with shiny metal exteriors and sparkling terrazzo floors.

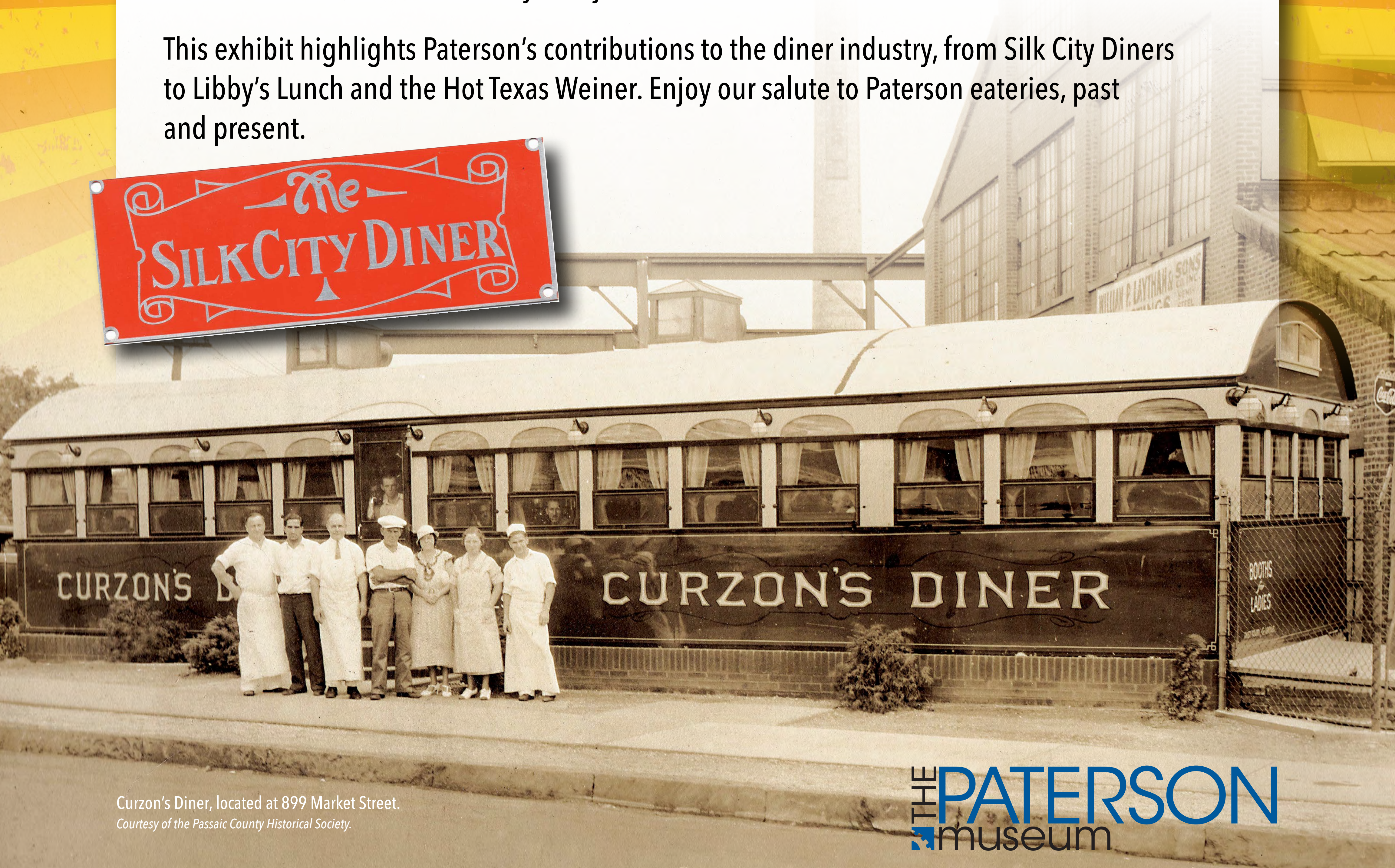
The atmosphere created by a diner can best be described as comfortable. As a result, many patrons are extremely loyal and attached to their "local." In Paterson, that loyalty can also be extended to include the grills serving Paterson's Hot Texas Weiners.



Once known as Geier's City Line Diner, the Egg Platter was built by the Master Diner Company of Pequannock, NJ. From the collection of Michael Gabriele.

New Jersey is well-known as the "Diner Capital of the World." This title is well deserved, not only because of the number of diner-style restaurants located in our state, but also because over twenty New Jersey companies once built pre-fabricated diners that were sold around the country. Paterson played an important role in the early years of the diner industry, a legacy which can still be seen in the city today.

This exhibit highlights Paterson's contributions to the diner industry, from Silk City Diners to Libby's Lunch and the Hot Texas Weiner. Enjoy our salute to Paterson eateries, past and present.



Curzon's Diner, located at 899 Market Street.
Courtesy of the Passaic County Historical Society.

Paterson Vehicle Company

The story of the Silk City Diner begins with a wagon company in Suffern, New York. In the 1890s, the business relocated to Paterson, New Jersey, and was renamed The Paterson Wagon Company. The product line included wagons, carriages, harnesses, and bicycles.



Everett Abbott Cooper. Courtesy of Les Cooper.

Everett Abbott Cooper (1860–1953) founded his wagon company in the 1880's and remained an influential contributor until his death. As company president, Cooper placed his five sons, Abbott, William, Fred, Irving, and Everett, in executive positions alongside him.

THE PATERSON WAGON CO.,
—BUILDERS AND DEALERS IN—



Fine Carriages,
Rockaways, Cabrioletes,
Light and Heavy Trucks.

Delivery Wagons
of Every Description.
Harness, Etc.

257 MARKET STREET.

Ad from the 1895-6
Paterson City Directory.

Bus outside of 824 E. 27th Street.
Paterson Museum Collection.

In 1905, the Paterson Wagon Company filed for bankruptcy and re-emerged a year later under the new name of the Paterson Vehicle Company. The Paterson Vehicle Company produced bus, car and truck bodies. They also provided painting and auto body detailing.



Buses outside 257 Market Street.
Paterson Museum Collection.

Silk City Diners

Shortly after World War I, the Paterson Vehicle Company began to explore the potential of diner manufacturing. By 1926, the Company had a division to focus solely on the commercial manufacture of diners.

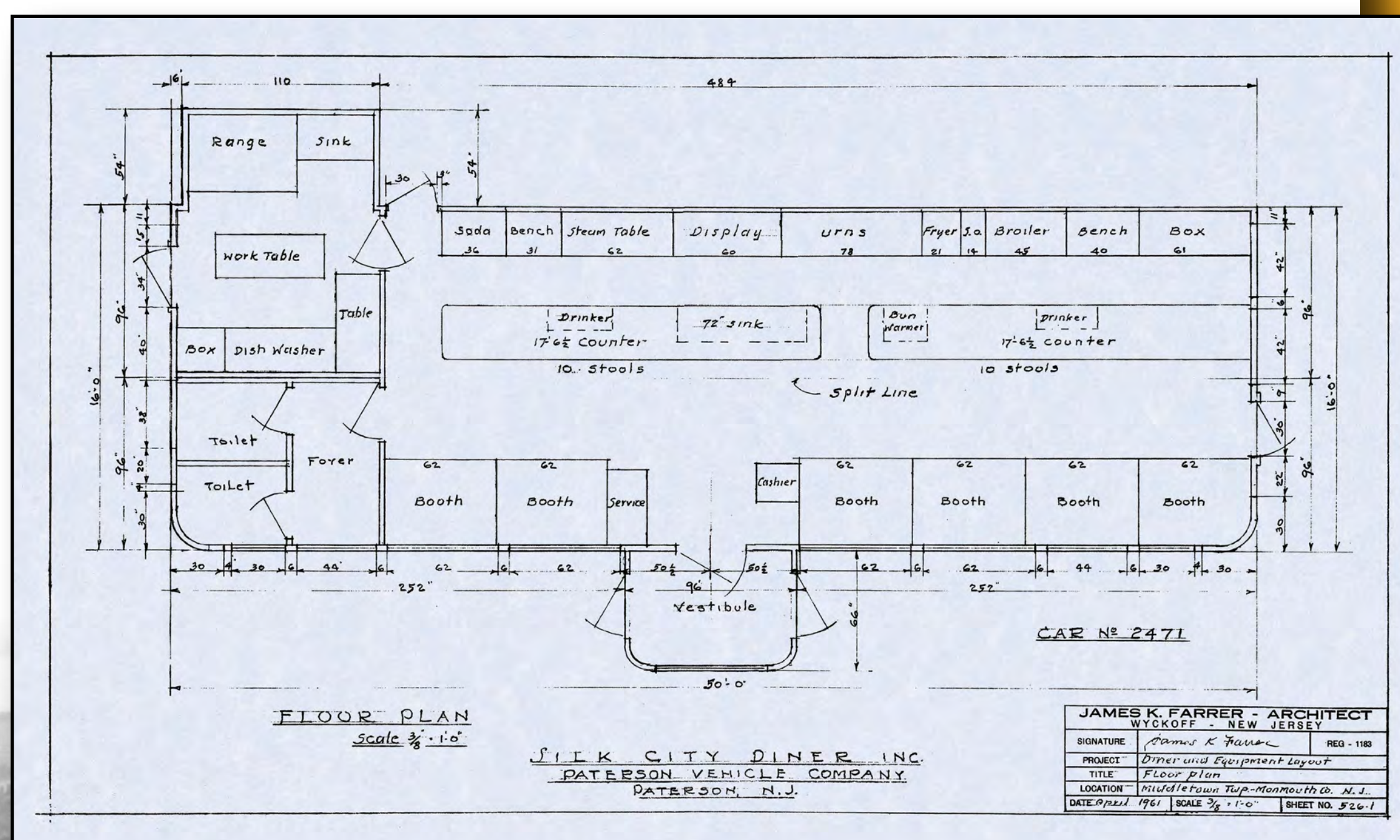
By the 1950s, the Silk City Diner was producing three standard sizes of "diner cars." All diners came fully equipped with grills, coffee urns, refrigerators and workbenches. The primary purpose for this standardization was to reduce production costs. As a result, they created distinct and identifiable eateries. During its peak, the Paterson Vehicle Company's Silk City Diner division shipped their pre-fabricated diners all over the Northeast. Some Silk City Diner Cars are still open for business throughout the United States including New Jersey, New York, Michigan and Wisconsin.

The Paterson Vehicle Company continued to produce diners until it began liquidation in 1965. Around this time, plans developed to start a new Silk City Diner Corporation, run by former employees, John Grinwis (Vice President of Sales) and Otto Pehle (Shop Foreman). They planned to rent the factory and continue to produce diners. However, Pehle and Grinwis were unable to secure the necessary funds and the transition was never finalized. The company finished liquidating its assets in January 1966.

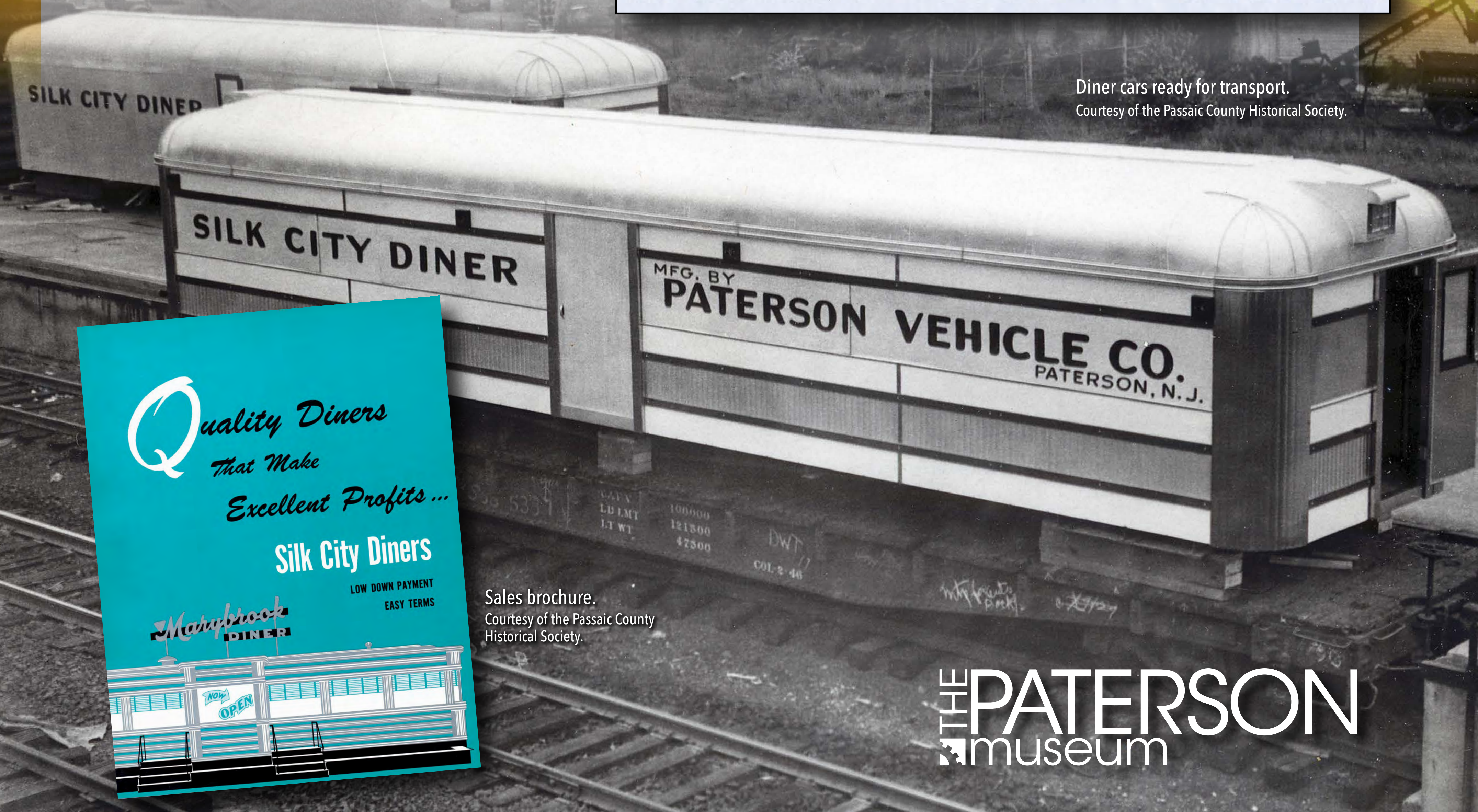


John Grinwis (left) with Bill Cooper.
Courtesy of the Passaic County Historical Society.

Silk City Diner Floor Plan, 1961.
Courtesy of the Passaic County Historical Society.



Diner cars ready for transport.
Courtesy of the Passaic County Historical Society.



Sales brochure.
Courtesy of the Passaic County Historical Society.

Hot Texas Weiners

Today, Paterson is well-known for its eclectic blend of food experiences and cultures. After all, the City motto is "Great Falls, Great Food, Great Future." One of the oldest of Paterson's culinary contributions is the Hot Texas Weiner. First served in Paterson in the 1920s, the Hot Texas Weiner has become a part of many Patersonians' identity and the significance of this "working man's food" to the greater community cannot be overstated.

What is the Hot Texas Weiner? The Hot Texas Weiner is a twice deep-fried, beef hot dog. If served "All the way," the dog is accompanied by spicy mustard, chopped onions and chili sauce. The secret to what makes a Hot Texas Weiner is the sauce. Each restaurant has its own sauce recipe, often known only by the owner. Despite the unique tweaks and twists each restaurant has on the chili sauce, they all resemble a Greek spaghetti sauce.



Cooking and dressing dogs at the Hot Grill, Clifton, NJ. Courtesy of Library of Congress.



Paul Agrusti at the Colonial Grill on Chamberlain Ave, circa 1975. Courtesy of Paul Agrusti.

Where does "Texas" come from? No connection between the State of Texas and the Hot Texas Weiner has ever been found. Texas was most likely added to the name as a marketing strategy, connecting the chili sauce to a spicy and exotic locale.

Today, only a few of the original restaurants that made the Hot Texas Weiner a Paterson staple are still open for business. In many cases, grills serving Hot Texas Weiners are located in the cities and towns surrounding Paterson, such as the Hot Grill in Clifton, the Lantern in Haskell and Goffle Grill in Hawthorne. Most of these establishments have links back to Paterson.



Two all the way. Courtesy of the Paterson Museum.

Colonial Grill interior. Courtesy of Paul Agrusti.



Pick up window at the Hot Grill, Clifton, NJ. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Paterson,

Home of the Hot Texas Weiner

As any local will tell you, not all Hot Texas Weiners are equal! People feel a strong allegiance to specific grills and specific chili sauce recipes. Here are some of the many restaurants that have served Hot Texas Weiners in Paterson over the years.

The Original New System Texas Weiner	225 Paterson Street 220 Paterson Street	Established 1920 Relocates 1967
Original Texas Hot Weiner Lunch	107 Washington Street	Established 1922
Libby's Lunch	98 McBride Avenue	Established 1936
Falls View	2-14 Spruce Street	Established 1938/1944
Olympic Grill	145 McBride Avenue	Established 1939
Johnny and Hanges	River Street & First Avenue	Established 1939
R&N Grill	991 Madison Avenue	Established 1948
Teddy's	693 Market Street	Established 1954
The Plaza	560 Main Street	Established 1961
M&R Sandwich	121 Main Street	Established 1966
The Flame Restaurant	1130 McBride Avenue	Established 1968
The Colonial Grill	464 Chamberlain Avenue	Established 1972

Ad, The Paterson Morning Call, 1967.



Colonial Grill employees, 2001. Courtesy of Paul Agrusti.



Colonial Grill Ad. Courtesy of Paul Agrusti.



Paul Agrusti, the Betts Brothers and fellow Falls View employees. Courtesy of Paul Agrusti.



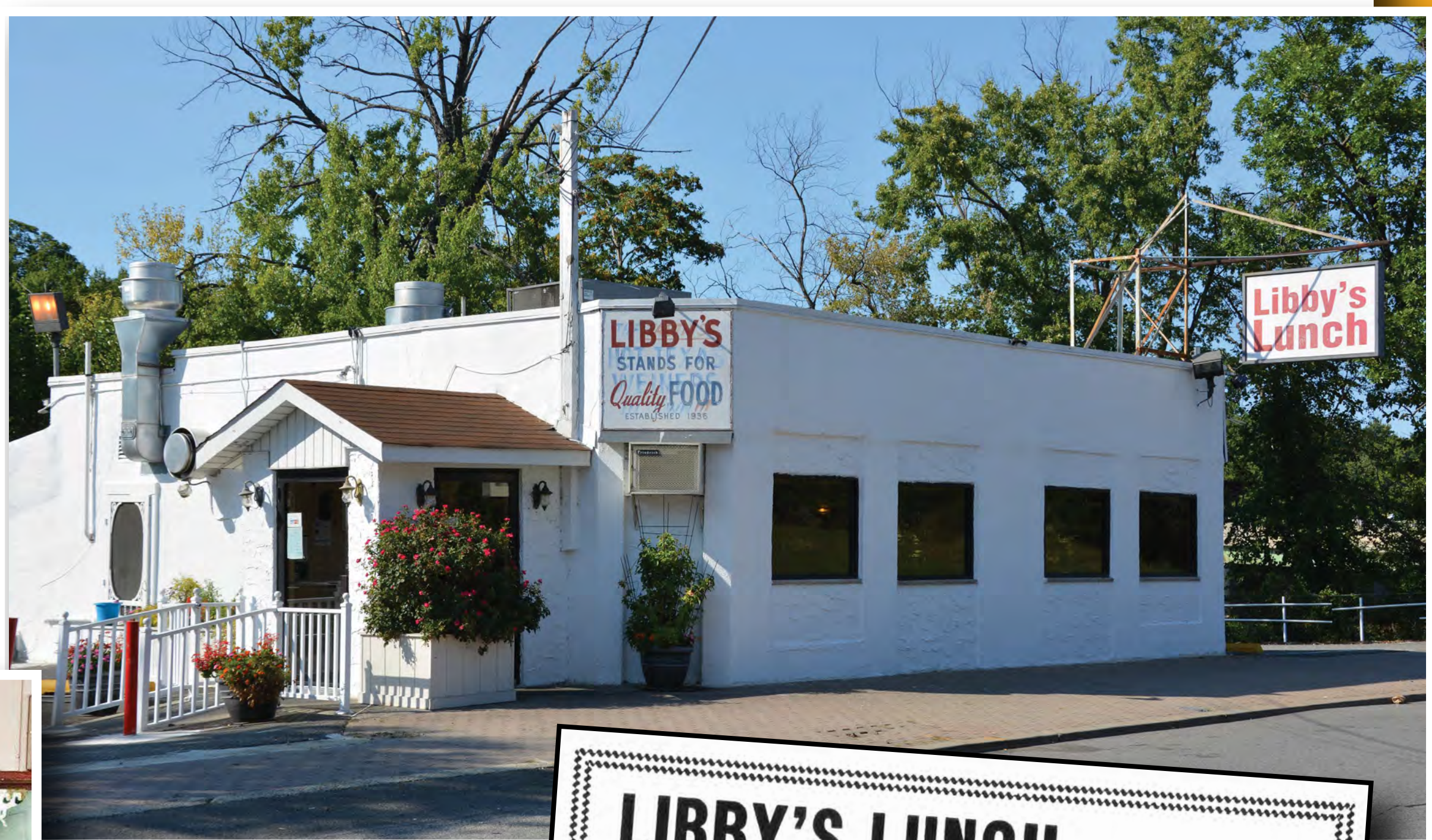
Falls View, once located on Spruce Street. Courtesy of Paul Agrusti.

Libby's Lunch

Libby's was not the first restaurant in Paterson to serve the Hot Texas Weiner, but the restaurant was the oldest operating Hot Texas Weiner establishment in New Jersey. Opened in 1936, by William Pappas, and first known as Libby's Hot Grill, the restaurant was positioned for success. Location is important in the restaurant business, and Libby's was located near several busy factories and the Great Falls. Attracting both members of Paterson's work force, as well as waves of tourists, Libby's introduced many people to the Hot Texas Weiner for the first time.

Libby's also played a part in the origin story of several similar grills and restaurants in the area. Staff from Libby's moved on to open Johnny and Hanges, Falls View Grill, Olympic Grill and Colonial Grill, to name a few. While each of these restaurants may have had their own version of the chili sauce, they became part of a larger food tradition with its roots in Paterson, New Jersey.

Libby's Lunch closed its doors on July 30th, 2020.



Libby's Lunch. From the collection of Michael Gabriele.

Libby's Lunch Interior. Courtesy of the New York Times.



Libby's Lunch Ad. The Paterson Morning Call, 1968.



The staff of Libby's Lunch, 1941. Courtesy of Paul Agrusti.

From *Marty & Phil's* to *Mr. G's*



Courtesy of the Gold Family.

Many diners have been in their neighborhoods for several lifetimes. They have witnessed changes in their communities and shifts in demographics, but have continued to serve as a focal point and gathering spot. Such is the case with the diner located at 455 East 18th Street.

The restaurant was first established by George Pickering in the early 1930s. The building was bought in 1954, by Marty Gold and his brother Phil Gold, and renamed Marty and Phil's Diner. The Gold's operated the restaurant themselves until 1958. Between 1959-1968, the Gold's leased the diner and it operated under the same name. The building was sold

in 1968, at which time the name changed to the 10th Avenue Diner. The restaurant was later known as the Egg Plate and the Pancake and Smokehouse Grill.

The diner was purchased in 2008 by Russell Graddy (1931-2021). A long-time Paterson resident, Graddy transformed the diner into the Original Mr. G's (also known as simply Mr. G's), which continued to serve the community. Along with the many locals to frequent the diner, Graddy welcomed President Barack Obama when he visited Paterson in 2011 and New Jersey First Lady, Tammy Murphy in 2018.



Courtesy of the Bergen Record.

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.

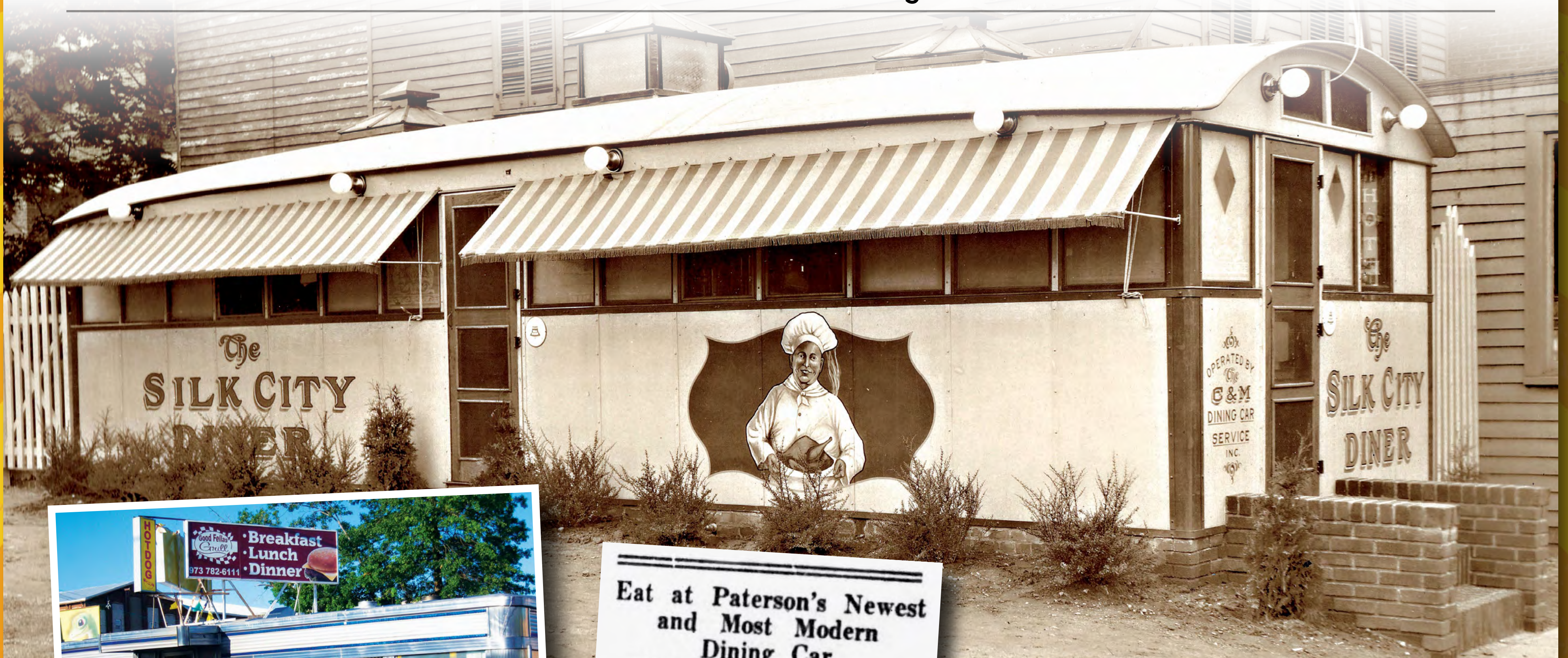
Courtesy of the Gold Family.



Paterson Diners, Past and Present

Since the rise of diner-style restaurants in the 1920s, Paterson has been home to countless diners scattered throughout the city. The appeal of diners, with their hearty but inexpensive fare, proved a successful business model in a city with a large number of factory workers. In some cases, the diners lasted for generations. In other cases, they were only in business for a few years. Some diner buildings were renamed several times in their lifetime. Here is a list of just some of Paterson's many diners:

5 Corners Diner	17 Lafayette Street 39 Lafayette Street 21 Lafayette Street	Established 1928 Relocated by 1950 Relocated by 1956
Curzon's Diner	899 Market Street	Established 1932
Brooks' Diner	108 Ellison Street 206 Ellison Street	Established 1932 Relocated 1934
Arrow Grill/ Madison Plaza Diner	1212 Madison Avenue	Established 1934 Renamed 1938
Washington Diner	22 Hamilton Avenue	Established 1937
Al's Diner	372 McLean Boulevard	Established 1938
Transit Diner	1080 Market Street	Established 1943
City Diner	263 21st Avenue	Established 1944
Lou's Diner	899 Market Street	Established 1946
City Line Diner	157 Crooks Avenue	Established 1947
Wonder Diner	317 Union Boulevard	Established 1947
Midway Diner	84th 1st Avenue	Established 1951
Frank's	57 Straight Street 445-47 Straight Street	Established 1955 Relocated 1956



The Silk City Diner. Courtesy of the Passaic County Historical Society.



Nicholas Diner, East Railway Avenue.
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.

Eat at Paterson's Newest
and Most Modern
Dining Car
Choice Meals or a Sandwich
Where Good Food is Not Expensive
BROOKS' DINER
PATERSON AND ELLISON STS.
NEVER CLOSED

Ad for Brooks' Diner, August 23, 1932.
From the Paterson Evening News.



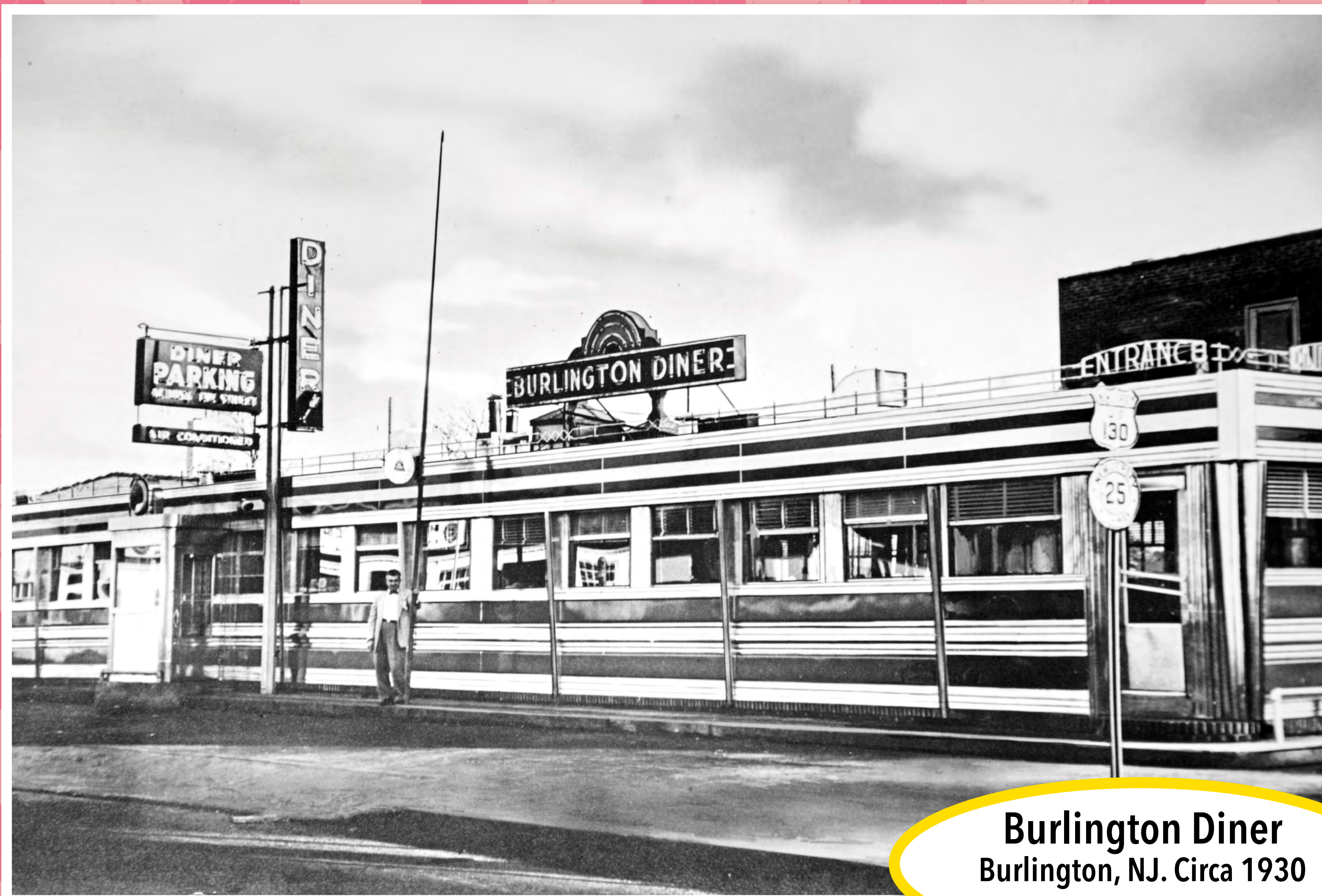
Amy's Omelette House
Burlington, NJ. Formerly Burlington Diner.

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Andover Diner
Andover, NJ

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Burlington Diner
Burlington, NJ. Circa 1930

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



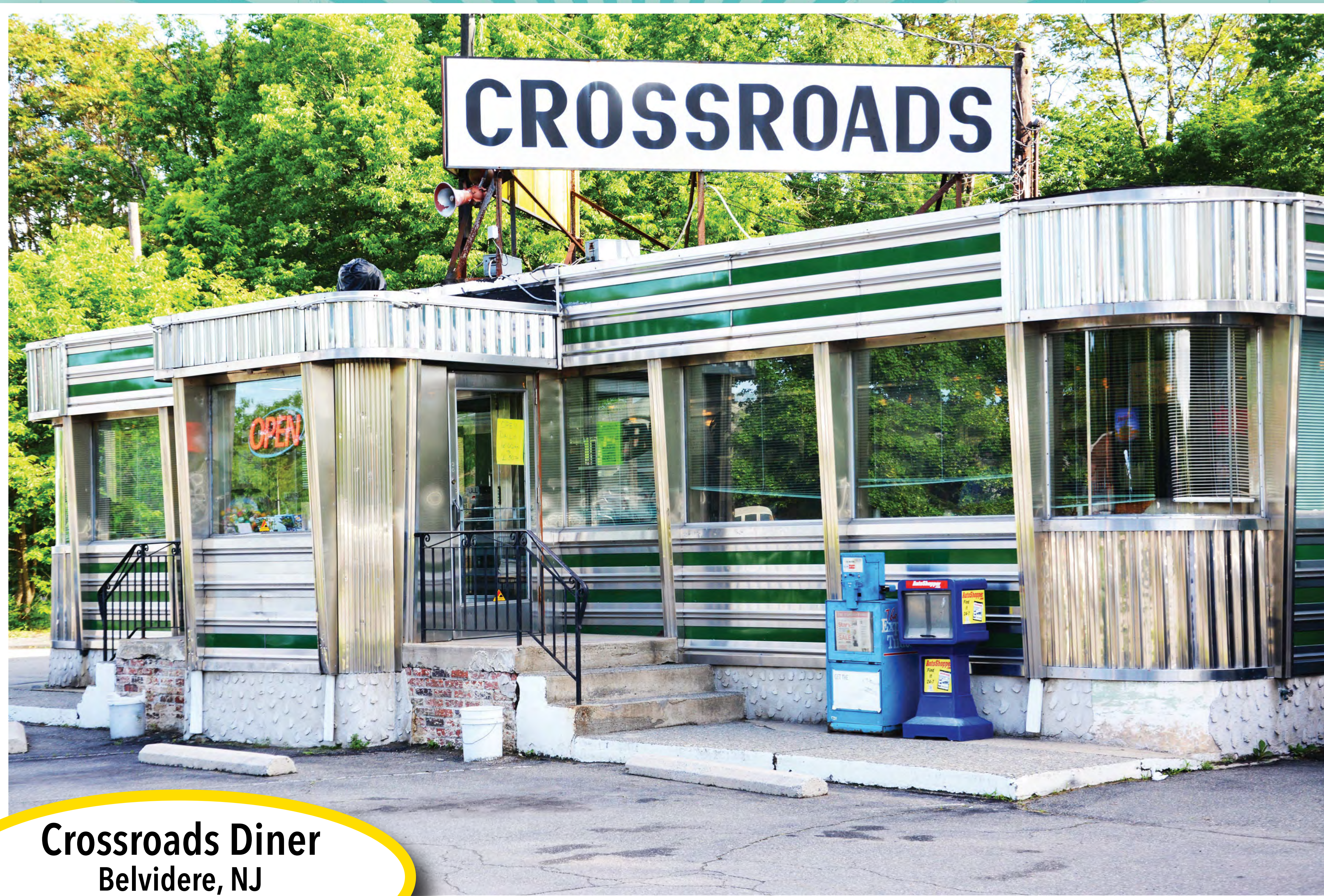
Bridgeview Diner
Kearny, NJ. Formerly the Truck Stop Diner.

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



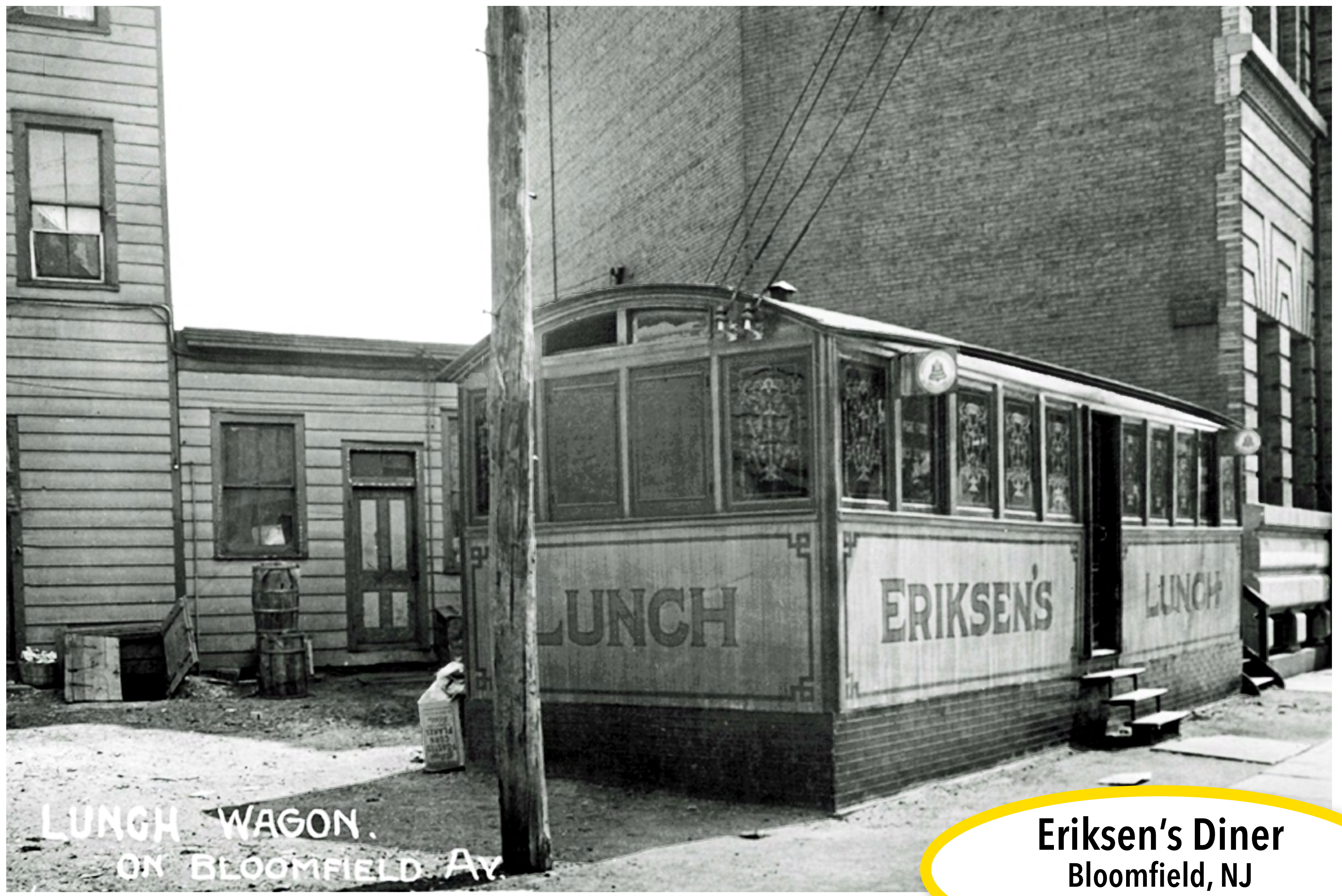
Broad Street Diner
Keyport, NJ

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Crossroads Diner
Belvidere, NJ

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



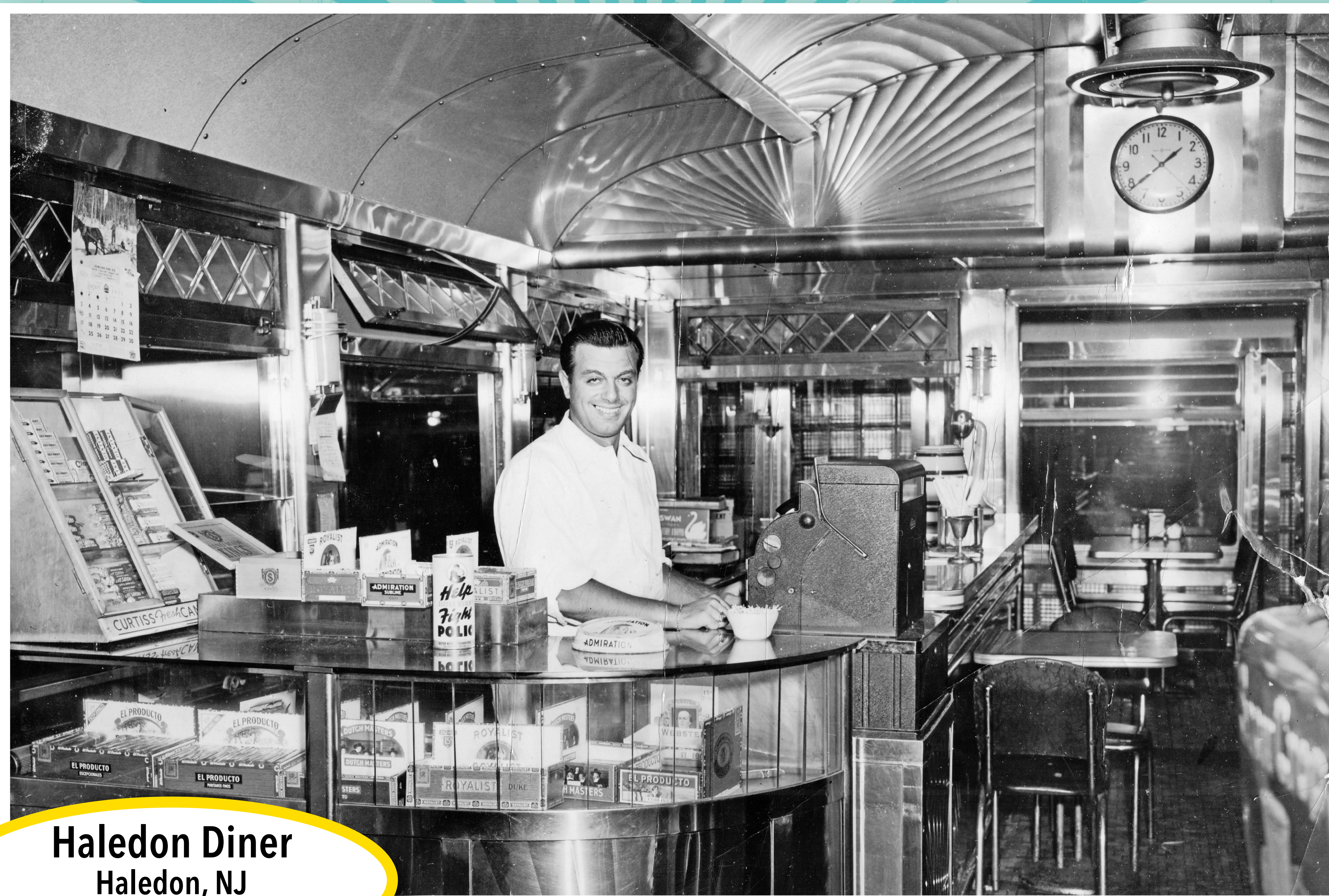
Eriksen's Diner
Bloomfield, NJ
From the collection of Rich Rockwell.



New Berlin Diner
Berlin, NJ
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Tick Tock Diner
Clifton, NJ
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Haledon Diner
Haledon, NJ
From the collection of Emily Diamond.



Menlo Park Diner
Edison, NJ

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Miss America Diner
Jersey City, NJ

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



**Paramount Diner Lot
Haledon, NJ**

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



**Avenue Diner
Location unknown.**

Built by Jerry O'Mahony Diner Company of Elizabeth, NJ

From the collection of Barbara Marhoefer.



Summit Diner
Summit, NJ
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Salem Oak Diner
Salem, NJ
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Pink Cadillac Diner
Wildwood, NJ

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Short Stop
Bloomfield, NJ

From the collection of Rich Rockwell.



**Franks Diner
Belleville, NJ**

From the collection of Barbara Vazquez.



**White Manna Diner
Hackensack, NJ**

From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Harbor Diner
Egg Harbor City, NJ
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Monmouth Diner
Red Bank, NJ
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Lyndhurst Diner
Lyndhurst, NJ
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.



Key City Diner
Phillipsburg, NJ
From the collection of Michael Gabriele.