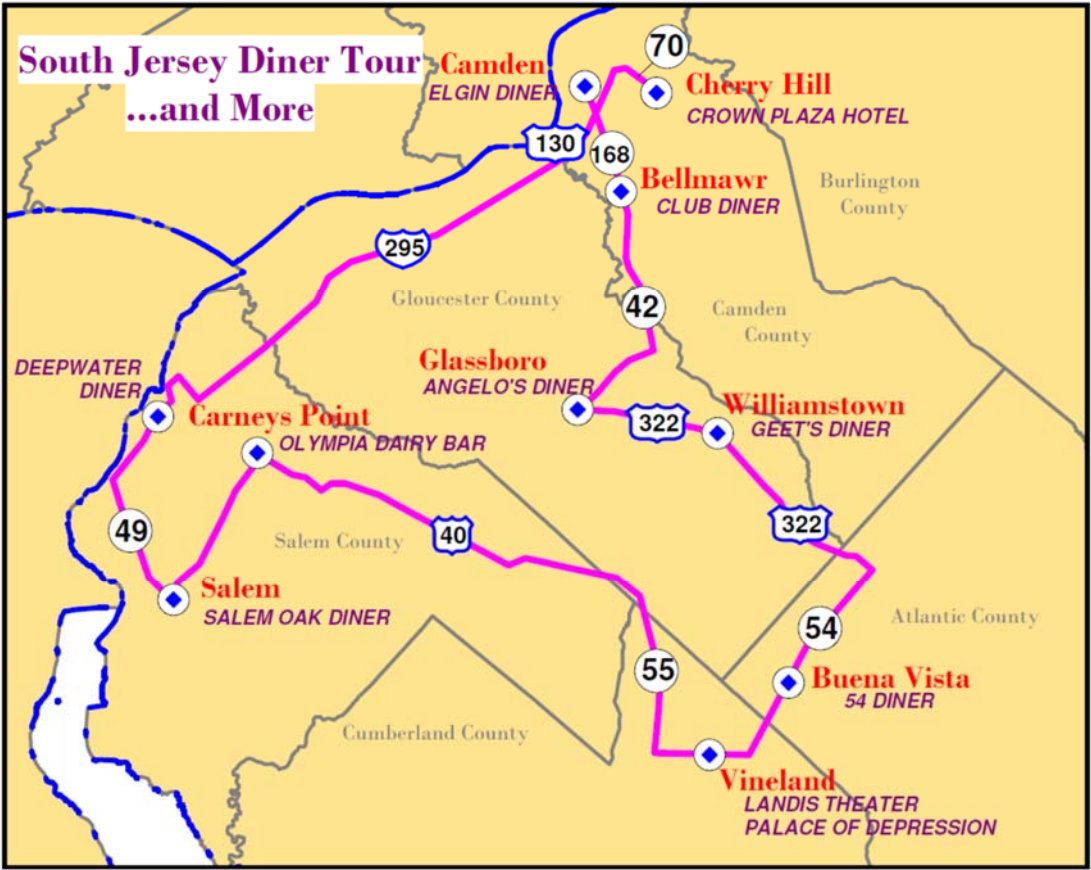




**KEVIN PATRICK
AND THE
SOCIETY FOR COMMERCIAL ARCHEOLOGY**

JERSEY DINER DRIVING...

The South Jersey Diner Tour and More is a roadside romp to, through, and past up to twenty diners, and a few other roadside surprises strung out on a triangular circuit of historic highways, including US 130, the Black Horse Pike, and US 40. These roads were established as important automobile highways in the 1920s, and accumulated a complex and fascinating roadside through the Interstate era when much of this network was bypassed by limited-access expressways, yet continued to grow because of ever-expanding suburbanization. Whether serving long distance travelers or local suburbanites, diners permeate these highways; small, stainless steel diners from the 1950s, seven-section Mediterranean models from the 1970s, and giant Jersey retro diners from around the turn of the 21st century. The diners are a South Jersey sampling from Kevin Patrick’s upcoming Stackpole Book, *Diners of New Jersey*. Scattered between are tire giants, produce stands, dairy bars, vintage theaters, traffic circles, and other roadside wonders that reveal a representative slice of the ever-dynamic, always changing Jersey roadscape.



CRESCENT BOULEVARD, US ROUTE 130

South Jersey’s main roads emerged during the 19th century as a radial network fanning out from the Camden ferries that crossed the Delaware River to Philadelphia. The Burlington Pike, the Marlton Pike, the White Horse Pike, the Blackwoodtown Pike, the Woodbury-Mantua Pike, and others angled across the flat, sandy terrain. The roads paralleled the tracks, which gave rise to a string of railroad suburbs and industrial towns that created radial corridors of development. The automobile inherited this network, and forced a 20th century upgrade that began with the 1926 opening of the Delaware River Bridge (now the Benjamin Franklin Bridge) between Camden and Philadelphia. Crescent Boulevard was built around the outskirts of Camden between 1925 and 1927 to intercept the traffic on the radial roads and re-direct it to the great span via Bridge Boulevard (rechristened Admiral Wilson Boulevard in 1929).



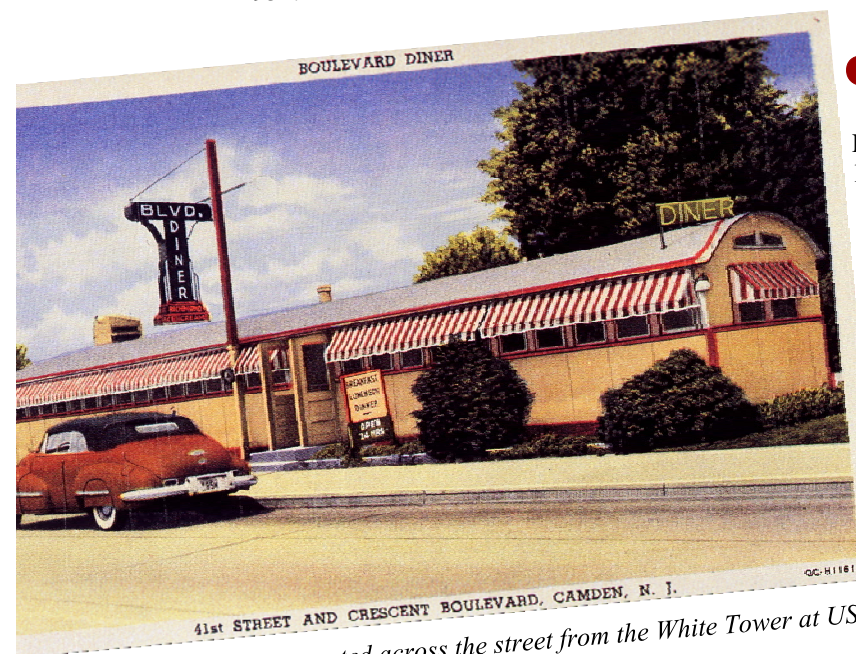
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An innovative circular interchange design was developed to move non-stop traffic through the connecting points between the radial roads and Crescent Boulevard. Actually an auto-oriented modification of the pre-existing plaza rotary, the first of these modern traffic circles was designed for the critical intersection of Bridge and Crescent boulevards. It came to be called the Airport Circle after the adjacent Central Airport opened in 1929, and carries that name still despite the airport's replacement with a shopping center in 1957. Richard Hollingshead opened the world's first drive-in movie theater on the Admiral Wilson Boulevard side of the circle in 1933, and although it lasted only three years, the idea soon spread across the country.

Another Crescent Boulevard circle was built at the Collingswood intersection with the White Horse Pike, and at the Brooklawn terminus of Crescent Boulevard where a short connector linked Crescent Boulevard with Delsea Drive, Woodbury Pike, and Crown Point Road. Concentrating an ever increasing volume of traffic, Crescent Boulevard was soon lined with diners, gas stations, and motels. Postwar improvements included two other Jersey inventions; the Jersey barrier to separate opposing lanes of traffic, and the jughandle ramp used to avoid treacherous left hand and U-turns. By 1927, Crescent Boulevard north from Airport Circle was marked as US 130, a spur off transcontinental US 30 that was also routed through the circle between Atlantic City and Philadelphia. Route 130 was later extended south along Crown Point Road to the Delaware River ferries in Salem County, creating a popular bypass around Philadelphia and Wilmington for traffic moving between New York City and points south until the completion of the New Jersey Turnpike in 1951.



Airport Circle soon after the 1946 flyway ramps were added to bring north and westbound US 30-130 traffic, and westbound NJ 38-70 traffic directly onto Admiral Wilson Boulevard.

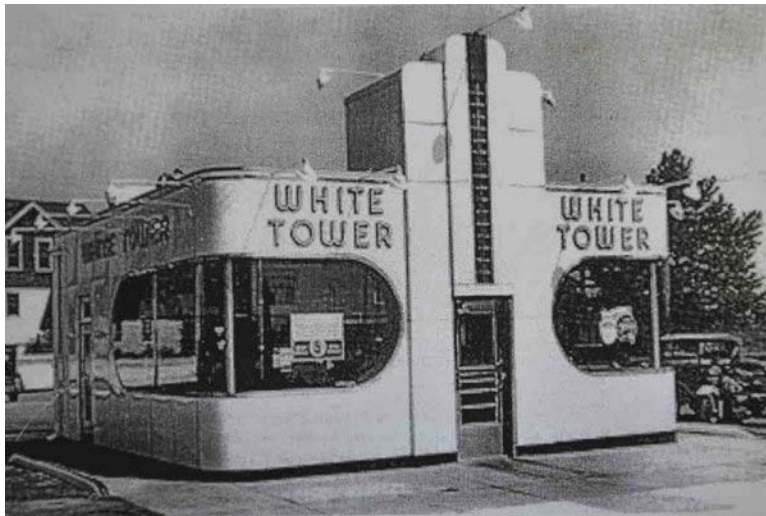


The Boulevard Diner once operated across the street from the White Tower at US 30 and Federal Street.

CAMDEN AREA WHITE TOWERS

Founded in 1926 by John and Thomas Saxe as a Milwaukee-based version of the popular nickel hamburger chain White Castle, White Tower swept eastward during the Great Depression landing in Philadelphia by 1932, and Camden soon afterward. Following a White Castle lawsuit for mimicking their diminutive castle building, White Tower hired architect Charles Johnson who created a streamline moderne, white, porcelain enameled box with a corner tower. Originally urban based and pedestrian oriented, White Tower adopted a slightly larger highway model in 1936, and expanded to the suburban fringe of the industrial cities the chain tended to favor.

White Tower followed the highways to the edge of Camden's suburbs, scattering six stores along Admiral Wilson Boulevard (US 30), and Crescent Boulevard (US 130) in the 1930s and 1940s. The Collingswood White Tower at US 130 and Haddon Avenue was a streamlined masterpiece built as a hamburger stand by local investors in 1936, and sold to White Tower in 1941. Postwar White Towers had a more cubist form, and Johnson added orange and turquoise to the all white building after 1956. The Collingswood White



The Collingswood White Tower at US 130 and Haddon Avenue in the 1940s (above), and its 1965 replacement in 2011 (below).

Tower was replaced in 1965 with an orange tiled and white porcelain cube topped by a center tower that had been abstracted into a three dimensional sign. After the last Camden area White Tower closed in 1981, the iconic little buildings were sold off, three on US 130 –including the Collingswood White Tower- becoming Roney’s, after a former manager who purchased them. One by one, they have all been lost, the Collingswood White Tower falling to a road widening project in 2011. Removed for a Walgreens, the Mt. Ephraim White Tower still stands, but in an unexpected and far off place. Saving it from demolition, Jersey native John Shoaf carted it off to his home in West Virginia.



COLLINGSWOOD DINER, COLLINGSWOOD

The Collingswood Diner represented the pinnacle of diner sophistication when Kullman assembled it on the edge of the Collingswood Circle in 1975. In radical contrast to then out of style stainless steel predecessors with their narrow counter-and-booth layout, the Collingswood was designed with a roomy vestibule, and six spacious sections: two for the diner part, with counter, window booths, and a double row of booths between; two for the carpeted and tabled dining room on the right and perpendicular to the diner; and two for the kitchen. The apexes of the shallow peaked ceilings mark the section seams. Deliberately concealing its prefabricated roots, the mansard-roofed diner is clad in silver streaked Wissahickon schist in the Mediterranean style popular at the time. Jimmy Papandrea has run the diner since 1987, which has benefited from the recent traffic circle redesign, and gentrification in Collingswood.

ELGIN DINER, CAMDEN

When this flared-cornered Kullman arrived on Mt. Ephraim Avenue in 1958 it was named the Fairlynne Diner after the two communities it sat between; Camden’s Fairview neighborhood, and the Boro of Woodlynne. Two years later it was resuscitated from bankruptcy by Jerry Vallianos who ran it as the Elgin Diner –a name inspired by Jerry’s wristwatch. Jerry’s son George eventually took over, and operated the Elgin until 2003. With an interior trimmed in white marbleized counter and table tops, an all stainless steel backbar, and a patterned terrazzo floor, the Elgin is the best preserved late-1950s Kullman in the state. The diner is a self-containing sectional with an L-shaped layout where the front counter-and-booth part of the diner, and the side dining room wrap around the kitchen.



The Collingswood Diner interior showing a typical 1970s-era Kullman sectional with large-chunk terrazzo floor.



Camden's Elgin Diner on Mt. Ephraim Avenue soon after it arrived in 1958 as the Fairlynnne (left). Bayram Yardim at the Elgin in 2011 (right).

The diner's dramatically flared corners reflect the exuberant, exaggerated modern designs of the late-1950s. One thing that has changed –amazingly enough- is its color. What appears to be red porcelain strips on the exterior are actually plastic inserts slid over top of the original gold and turquoise flex-glass, an alternative to the porcelain enamel strips that were more common to diner facades. As incredible as it is to have one well-preserved diner of this type in South Jersey, there are actually two. It's near twin –same manufacturer, design, and even flex-glass color scheme- was set up as the Clayton Diner 20 miles south on Delsea Drive (NJ Route 47) in 1964. After a nervous period of idleness, the Elgin was rescued by Ali Yardim and his son Bayram, and reopened in 2009. The Yardim family is representative of a recent shift in ownership of older Jersey diners from Greeks to Turks. Coincidentally, Turkish immigrant Mehmet Akin bought the Elgin's Clayton twin in 1986, renaming it the Liberty Diner.

BLACK HORSE PIKE

The Blackwoodtown Turnpike was chartered in 1855 as one of the radial turnpikes emanating from Camden. It originally connected with the Williamstown Turnpike via Cross Keys, but did not extend through the swampy, infertile Pine Barrens to the Atlantic Coast. The Blackwoodtown Turnpike's destiny to become the spine of a suburban corridor was assured with the completion of the Camden, Gloucester, and Mt. Ephraim Railway in 1876. This line became the Gloucester Branch of the Reading Railroad and extended parallel to the turnpike through Blackwoodtown to Spring Mills (Grenloch) in 1891. Its station stops –Bellmawr, Runnemede, Glendora, Chews Landing, Blenheim, and Blackwood- became railroad suburbs. In the 20th century, these bedroom station stops were augmented by auto-oriented housing developments built along the old turnpike,

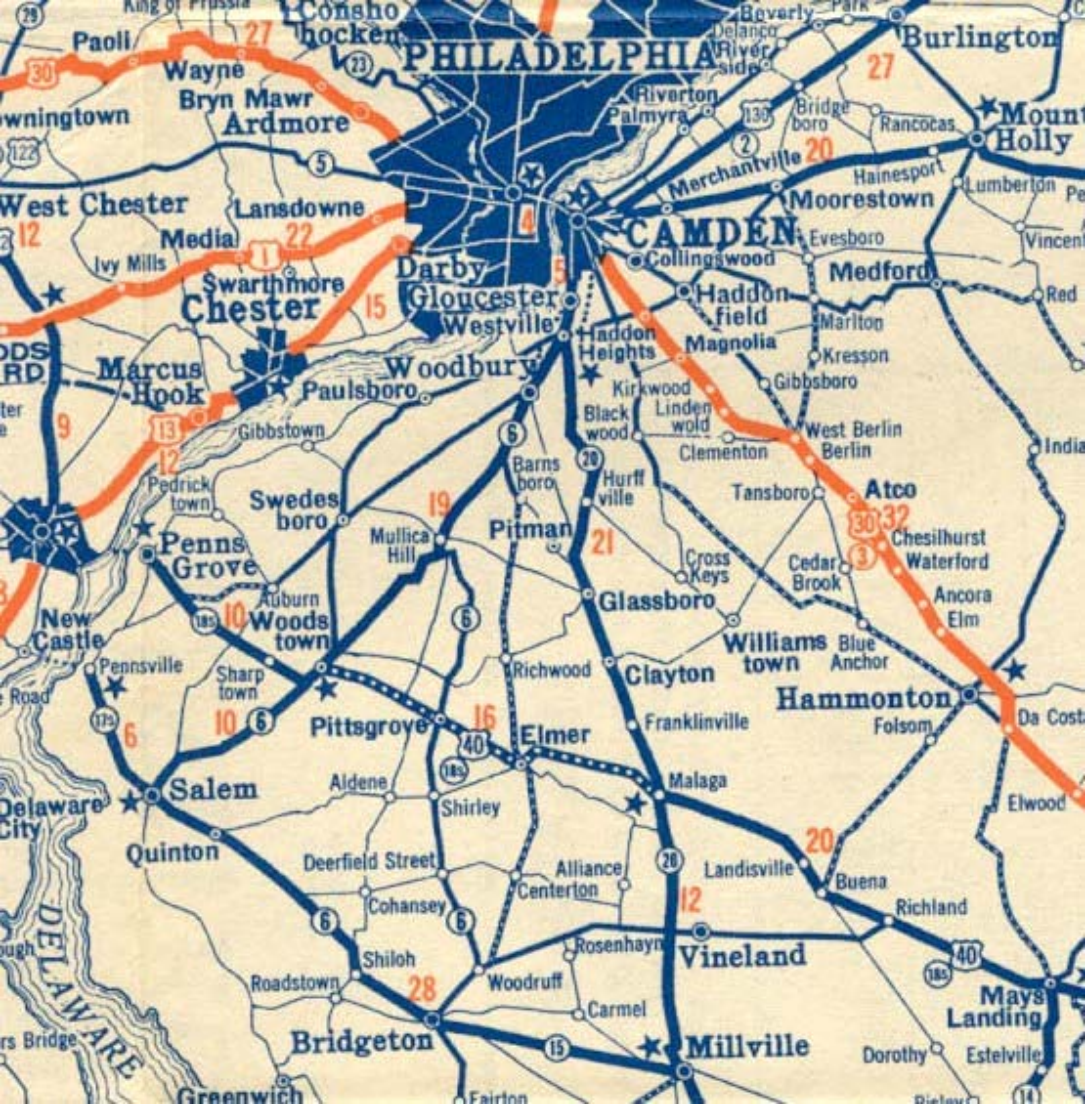


The Harwin Theater and White Tower standing to the right of this 1950s postcard scene were recently displaced by a Walgreens. The theater was demolished, and the White Tower was moved to West Virginia.

which was bought by the county and freed in 1903, paved with concrete in 1912, and rechristened the Black Horse Pike in 1915. The name was a play on the more heavily traveled White Horse Turnpike, which was established in 1854 as the main road between Camden and the new seashore resort of Atlantic City. The White Horse Pike was completely paved by 1921, and signed as part of transcontinental US 30 in 1925. Envious of the through traffic and its associated business, the Black Horse Pike Booster Association was formed to promote the building of a second main road between Camden and Atlantic City. Their efforts were largely successful when in 1931 a four-lane highway was completed across the Pine Barrens from the old turnpike near Turnersville to the Atlantic County village of McKee City where it connected with the Atlantic City-Penns Grove road, which four years before had been improved and signed as part of transcontinental US 40. Unlike the White Horse Pike, the Black Horse Pike never carried a single, through-marked federal highway shield, but most of the new section was assigned to US 322, which followed the old Lakes-to-Sea Highway auto trail laid out in the 1920s from Atlantic City through Williamstown, and Glassboro, to Chester, Pennsylvania, and ultimately Cleveland, Ohio. In 1957, the North-South Freeway (NJ Route 42) was built in conjunction with the Walt Whitman Bridge to Philadelphia. The freeway cut through the South Jersey suburbs to join the four-lane Black Horse Pike in Turnersville, a bypassing of both colored horse pikes that was made complete with its 1965 extension as the Atlantic City Expressway. As the suburbs reach farther down the Black Horse Pike, the motel courts are gradually being abandoned and razed for fast food restaurants, the produce stands are becoming home and garden stores, and dilapidated old filling stations rot in weedy lots eclipsed by convenience stores, but the diners have an opportunity to gain more from local suburbanites than they lost from traffic drawn to the expressway.

CLUB DINER, BELLMAWR

Jersey diners are frequently connected in unexpected ways through networks of related Greek families, and buildings that could be moved about. The original Club Diner was a late-1920s monitor roofed Ward & Dickinson car that was brought to the Black Horse Pike from Hazleton, Pennsylvania, in 1946



This 1927 map shows the Black Horse Pike as a minor road that did not extend much beyond Blackwood. US Route 130 did not go any farther south than Camden, and US 40 was still unpaved between Malaga and Woodstown. The White Horse Pike (US 30), however, was then the most significant road in South Jersey.



George Giambanis at the Club Diner in Bellmawr.

The Club Diner’s postmodern retro-renovation of a 1963 Kullman Princess.

by Ralph and Edna Weed. Three generations of Weeds worked the diner over the next half century, finally replacing the old car in 1972 with a 1963 Kullman Princess joined with a Kullman dining room that came from the old Somerdale Diner. The old Club was carted off to Paulsboro, New Jersey, where it was covered over and operated as the Cup and Saucer Restaurant. The new Club, topped with a pink neon, cursive, roof sign, was a big-windowed, stainless steel jewel of 1960s-era exaggerated modernity until a 2004 renovation unified both diner parts under a postmodern façade that accentuated its Jetsonian ambiance, and expanded the diner from 110 to 150 seats. By then, the Club had been purchased by partners George Giambanis and Bob Pantelous. George was born in Athens, Greece, and brought to America two months later. He grew up in the diner business, working with his father, Nick, and uncle’s Nick and Mike Fifis, who bought Ponzio’s Brooklawn Diner in the early 1960s. In 1964, the Fifis family carried the Ponzio name to Cherry Hill, and applied it to the old Ellisburg Diner on NJ Route 70. George went to work at Weber’s Colonial Diner in Audubon, and Deptford’s Free-way Diner before taking over the Club in 2000. His son Nick is now learning the business.

PHILY DINER, RUNNEMEDE

Runnemedede has been a diner town since the 1920s when the barrel roofed Runnemedede Diner opened along the Black Horse Pike on a lot destined to be built over by the Phily Diner’s cavernous sports bar. The fabulous Phily is an unabashed exclamation of the big Jersey diner’s dynamic drive to adapt to ever changing market conditions. The diner’s giant, juke box-inspired vestibule, and podium placed 1957 Ford Fairlane arrived with a postmodern retro remodel in 1993 when Bill Ballis partnered with Petro Kantos. The renovation was completed by United Diner Company of Philadelphia. The Phily’s 1950’s styling suggests a continuity that goes back to the 1954 Mountain View that once operated here as the Empire Diner. The current diner, however, came after the Empire was retired, and is actually a remodel of a late-modern 1985 DeRaffele that once had white marble piers run by Petro Kantos as the Century Diner. Sprawling sports bars sporting a phalanx of plasma screen TVs has become the latest suburban Jersey diner angle to attract a younger crowd, and increase business in the wee hours of the night. United Diner was brought back to build the Phily Sports Bar, complete with brick pizza oven and banquet facilities, in 2010.



Wacky Roadside Wonder:

**DEL BUONO’S BAKERY,
HADDON HEIGHTS**

An otherwise nondescript white brick building festooned with fiberglass gorillas, chickens, pigs, and various miniature golf course rejects, Del Buono’s maybe the most well known bread bakery in South Jersey. Customers pull their piping hot rolls right from the conveyor belt that sweeps them from the oven. And there is always a crowd. Nino Del Buono is the bakery’s impresario, orchestrating the ovens as “the friend of the working man.” He is also an actor who had a roll in the movie Witness, and announces prize fights on the side. The business started on Emerald Street in Camden in 1918. In 1963, Nino’s father Constantino relocated the bakery down the Black Horse Pike to Haddon Heights where Nino has since assembled a cast off menagerie of animal statuary from all over the state. Turn at the black horse, and be prepared to buy a bag of fresh rolls.



MEADOWS DINER, BLACKWOOD

The Meadows Diner’s towering glass block vestibule is the hallmark of the postmodern retro diner. Small, phone booth sized vestibules were originally added as a double-door air locks to keep cold drafts out of the diner in the winter time. Vestibules grew over the 1950s to function as small waiting rooms, then shifted from the center front to the front corner in the 1960s and 1970s to accommodate the popular L-shape layouts. This layout prevented inbound customers waiting to be seated, and outbound customers waiting to check out from crowding the center of the restaurant. With the arrival of the postmodern retro diners in the 1990s, the commodious vestibule grew vertically to tower over the diner as a sign-supporting, neon trimmed, advertising beacon of backlit glass block, and mirror finish stainless steel. Abandoning the sedate, blend-in ways of the 1970s, the retro diner now commands attention on the commercial roadside.

The Meadows’ L-shaped layout has the diner extending to the right, and dining room to the left. This interior arrangement, and the scalloped counter is a signature of the 1960s, well-blended as it is with the 1950s retro remodel that occurred in 2001. The diner originally operated in nearby Gibbsboro before coming to the southern edge of Blackwood in the 1980s, locating across the Black Horse Pike from its current spot. Its popularity is apparent by the crush of customers on most weekend mornings and evenings who are drawn as much by the exuberant owners Tommy and Maria as the food.

Wacky Roadside Wonder:

COOKIE JAR HOUSE, GLENDORA

Every now and then someone tries to reinvent the house in the most unexpected of ways. It never catches on, but it always results in a zany, must-see roadside attraction. In 1947, a prototype steel framed, three-story round house centered on a spiral staircase was built on Rowand Avenue in Glendora. It was intended to be the first of a community of similar houses, but no others followed. When will round house fans get it? Furniture is rectangular. Lots of space is wasted. The house’s original stucco has been replaced by formstone, and its leaky flat roof exchanged for a lid. It is unclear what the designer was going for, but what they got was something that is widely recognized as the Cookie Jar House.



The Meadows Diner on the Black Horse Pike in Blackwood.

WHITMAN DINER, TURNERSVILLE

Few restaurants could migrate from inner to the outer suburbs as effectively as transportable diners like the Whitman. This 1960s DeRaffele originally operated on US 130 closer to Camden back when anything shoreward of Turnersville was pine forests and farmland. It was relocated down the Black Horse Pike in 1975, and stoned up in the 1980s just as the housing developments started to arrive with a whole new clientele. By the 1990s, the diner stone age was over. United Diner Company of Philadelphia gave the Whitman a complete retro remake around 1998 when the stone was replaced with the mirror-finished stainless trimmed in red it has now. Although thoroughly remodeled inside



and out, the original L-shaped layout is still apparent beyond the towering streamlined vestibule. Eight window booths and counter stools run to the left, and eight window booths and tables run to the right. The Whitman interior may project a sleek reinterpretation of the 1950s, but the ambiance and décor is all pseudo-‘60’s with spindly legged chairs in contrasting red and white, modernist chandeliers, and funky port hole windows in the attached million-dollar contemporary-chic bar described as a “state-of-the-art martini lounge dressed in sensuous curves and vibrant décor.” Owners George and Jeanie Poulianas has ushered their father’s diner into the 21st century stating, “the Whitman captures the aura of the "Jersey Diner" and raises the bar to new heights.”

PB’S DINER, GLASSBORO

Greg Petsas and Gus Benas opened the original P & B Diner in 1954 on a point of land between Delsea Drive and Main Street. In 1963, they traded in their stainless steel Mountain View for a tile-sided Swingle, and set it beneath a large sign ablaze with neon coffee cup. In 1983, Benas moved the diner to Mullica Hill, gave it a Colonial remodel, and re-opened it as the Harrison House. A new six section Kullman was brought to Glassboro, erected across Delsea Drive from the original, and put into business in 1984 as PB’s Diner. True to its time period, PB’s has the stone façade, and partial mansard awnings inspired by the environmental diners that preceded it; and the boxy form of contemporary late-modernism. Reflecting the changing clientele, the diner was renamed PB’s Tavern after a recent remodel converted the counter –last haunt of lone dining men and coffee klatchers- into a hip bar for coeds from nearby Rowan University.



Turnersville’s Whitman Diner, a United Diner remodel of a 1960s DeRaffele.

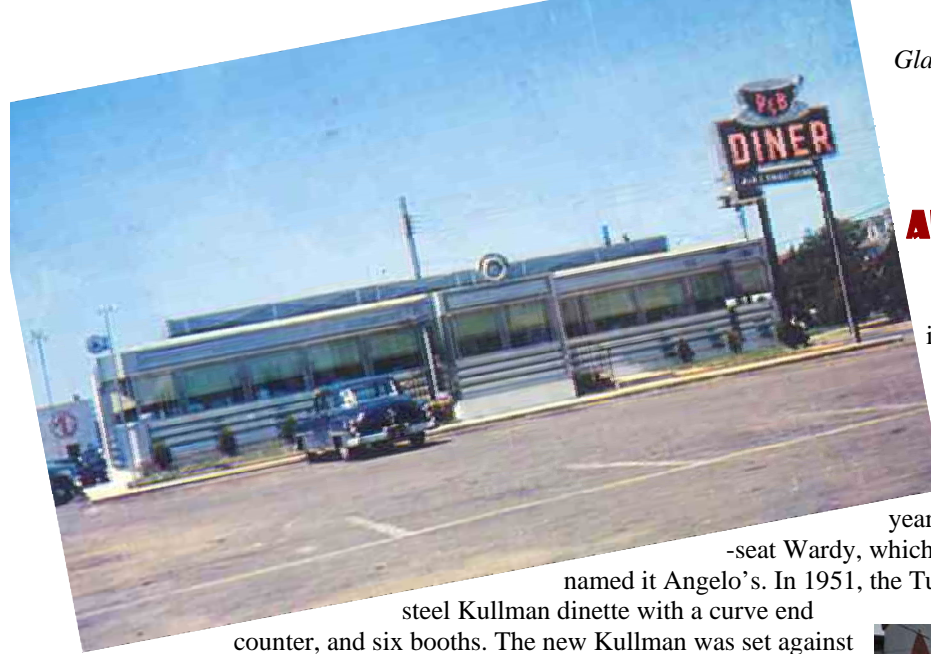


The Whitman Diner’s retro-mod martini bar illustrates the unexpected amenities that can be found in big Jersey diners of the 21st century (left).

Wacky Roadside Wonder:

JERSEY GIANTS: WERBANY’S NITRO GIRL AND THE COWTOWN COWBOY

Stare-eyed and grinning, arms bent at the elbows or hailing, left palm down, right palm up, and usually holding some article of advertisement; there is a race of giants that inhabit the roadside who despite their other-worldly appearance originated from a Paul Bunyan mother-mold made by Prewitt Fiberglass of Venice, California in 1962 for PB’s Café in Flagstaff, Arizona. International Fiberglass bought the company a year later, and used the mold to unleash an army of giants across America wielding such oversized items as axes, mufflers, tires, hamburgers, hot dogs, golf clubs, and pizzas. Although the company hasn’t made these giants since 1976, the ones still standing continue to be bought and sold, and moved about. The 20-foot Cowtown Rodeo giant outside Woodstown was bought at an auction in 1975, and outfitted with hat, gun and holster. International also made the super-sized, hip-out, Jackie Kennedy-doppelganger “Miss Uniroyal” as a 1964 promotion for US Tire’s retail stores. One has been standing at the Werbany Tire Town on the Black Horse Pike in Hilltop since 1969. The Werbany titaness has recently been repainted as “Nitro Girl” to advertise their nitrogen filled tires.



Glassboro's P&B Diner when it was a 1954 Mountain View, #385

ANGELO'S DINER, GLASSBORO

Angelo's Diner is the definition of a local institution, and a testament to the small diner many say is uneconomical to operate in high-cost New Jersey. The original Angelo's was built by Ward & Dickinson Dining Car of Silver Creek, New York, and sent to Glassboro in 1926 for William Heritage and S. Fred Kotler. Twenty years later, Angelo and Helen Tubertini bought the 20

-seat Wardy, which was set up on Glassboro's Main Street, and re-named it Angelo's. In 1951, the Tubertinis bought a brand new green and stainless steel Kullman dinette with a curve end counter, and six booths. The new Kullman was set against the sidewalk next door to the old diner, which was moved out. Set betwixt downtown Glassboro, and Glassboro State College (now Rowan University), Angelo's became a fixture over the decades. When Angelo died in 1980, Helen sold the diner to their daughter, Mary Ann, and her husband Joe Justice who had been working there ten years. Angelo's is still a lively place with a lot of regulars, and an increasing stream of newcomers who fill the diner to capacity on most weekend mornings.

GEETS DINER, WILLIAMSTOWN

When Geets Diner was first opened by Jim and Rose Sylvester in 1942, it was a little highway diner catering to truckers and shore traffic traveling between Camden and Atlantic City. It was an isolated outpost on the edge of Williamstown where the Black Horse Pike joined US 322. Increased traffic after World War II warranted an expansion, and the old diner was replaced by a silver-sided, 72-seat Fodero, which itself was replaced by the current six-section diner in the 1960s. Geets was Jim's nickname, an otherwise nonsensical word projected from a towering sign that became a visual landmark to all motorists heading to and from the Jersey Shore. The sign meant you were almost home or well down the road depending on your direction. Jim's son Frank took the restaurant into the 1980s before retiring, and selling the diner to what became a series of owners. In the 1990s, a NJ Transit bus crashed into the diner facilitating the current postmodern retro remodel with mirrored stainless steel strips alternating with polished granite panels, and red accents. The indestructible black, brown, and beige flecked terrazzo floor, however, is original to the day it was laid. Over the last thirty years, the surrounding farmland and pine forests have filled up with housing developments, turning Geets from an isolated highway diner into a large, suburban diner complete with a spacious sports bar.



Angelo's Diner, a 1951 Kullman (above) kept in pristine condition by Joe and Helen Justice (below).





Black Horse Pike institution, Geets Diner, at the edge of Williamstown.

PETER'S DINER, MONROE TOWNSHIP

As the fourth postmodern retro diner in 20 miles of Black Horse, Peter's represents the popularity of this type of themed eatery in suburban New Jersey during the 1990s and early 2000s. Red, white, blue, and stainless, with a towering, glass block vestibule, Peter's Diner was constructed on-site in 2004 by the United Diner Company of Philadelphia. United Diner fills a niche created by the 1990s resurgence in classic diners adapted to the size and layout requirements of contemporary restaurants. Whereas prefabricated reinterpretations of 1950s diners were churned out by traditional diner companies like Kullman, Paramount Modular Concepts, and upstarts like Starlite, and Dinermite, retro renovations of existing diners, and built on-site restaurants made to look prefabricated were also being constructed. This was a full twist from the twenty year span before 1985 when prefabricated diners did their best to hide their factory origins to masquerade as on-site restaurants. United Diners builds contemporary restaurants in a variety of styles, including a retro diner style, like Peter's, which sports a patriotic color scheme inspired by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The interior décor, however, not only pays homage to American mid-20th century styles, but also to the Greek heritage of its owner, Angelo Giannkarris, with a pantheon of Greek gods, goddesses, and legendary figures classically depicted on the walls.



Wacky Roadside Wonder

HERITAGE'S DAIRY STORES

One-stop shop for such low order goods as gas, bread, milk, tobacco, and snacks, the modern convenience store is the offspring of the postwar dairy store. Because few things are more perishable than fresh milk, most metropolitan regions sit within a milk shed that puts the milk people drink relatively close to the cows that make it. Many can remember when milk was delivered fresh to the home each day by a milkman covering the route for a local dairy. Milk routes declined after World War II as auto-borne customers increasingly went out to get their own milk. Dairies switched to retailing their milk at their own dairy stores, which began to sell other low-order items as a convenience to their customers, and as a way to increase sales. Convenience stores like Wawa, Sheetz, Seven-Eleven, and Cumberland Farms all began this way, as did South Jersey's own Heritage's Dairy Stores. Harold H. Heritage, known as Grandpop Skeets, was a West Deptford farmer who started selling milk in the Woodbury-Thorofare area in 1930 using the output of one broken-legged cow. By 1936, Skeets had a regular milk route in Paulsboro, and was on his way to establishing a herd of 120 cows. Heritage's Dairy opened their first retail store in Westville in 1957, and have since expanded to about 30 stores centered on Gloucester County.



Heritage's Woodbury Store #2.

Postmodern architecture is all about reinterpreting past styles or using unconventional designs in opposition to the modernist idiom, which rejected historical influences to create rational designs derived from the function of the space. Peter's Diner, and other retro diners like it, is a postmodern reinterpretation of the classic mid-20th century stainless steel diner that uses similar materials to create the ambience of the past without actually reconstructing it.

54 DINER, BUENA VISTA TOWNSHIP

The 54 Diner is a 1957 Mountain View that sits in an unexpected location isolated out on Route 54 in Buena Vista Township. Diners of its vintage were typically located at the edge of towns, or along more heavily traveled highways, but this is not the 54's first home. The 54 was built to be the first Country Club Diner in Voorhees Township. When the Country Club upgraded to a Colonial model Fodero in 1971, the old Mountain View was briefly relocated to Pemberton, New Jersey, before landing in Buena Vista in 1972. It has had a number of owners since then, the current being Al and Missy Rincon. Mountain View Dining Car of Singac, New Jersey, was a prolific diner maker in the 1950s, producing hundreds of stainless steel restaurants shipped throughout the Northeast United States and beyond. The red-trimmed 54 retains all of the diner characteristics typical of a 1957 Mountain View, including scroll-end caps on its rounded corners, and a counter that curves into the wall supported by a base covered in gray and pink ceramic tiles. Despite Mountain View's popularity, the company closed the same year it made the 54 Diner.



The 54 Diner is a celebration of the 1950s. Its two-toned pink and gray counter base was a popular color scheme at the time.

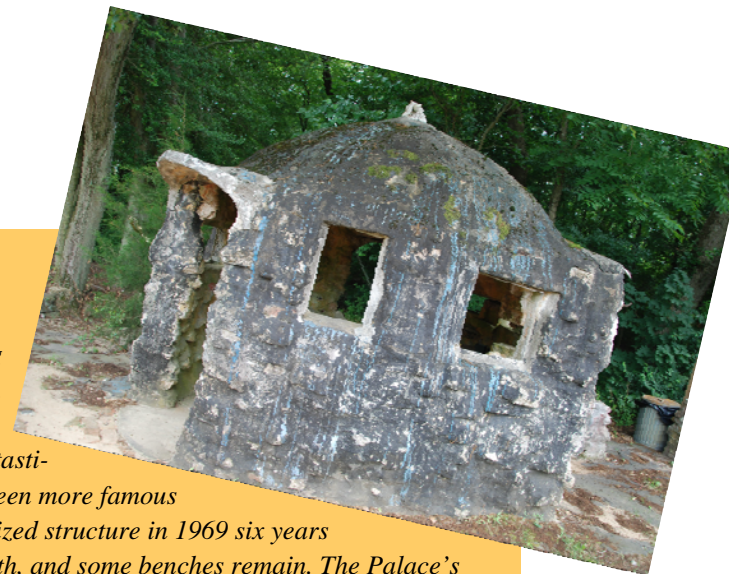
Wacky Roadside Wonder:

VINELAND'S LANDIS AVENUE

Charles K. Landis founded Vineland, New Jersey, in 1861 as a model agricultural community and temperance town with broad, tree-lined streets, and substantial homes. Landis recruited farmers, especially Italians interested in growing grapes, and attracted Thomas Bramwell Welch who in 1869 perfected a technique of preserving grape juice without fermentation to produce non-alcoholic sacramental wine that was the origin of Welch's Grape Juice. Downtown Vineland was laid out along the 100-foot wide Landis Avenue, which has acquired some roadside gems over the years. The recently restored Landis Theater is a curved-cornered, streamlined moderne palace of white brick, glass block, and blue porcelain enameled panels with a sweeping marquee completed in 1937. Farther west on Landis, a recent building removal revealed a vintage Uneeda Biscuit wall sign. After the National Biscuit Company (Nabisco) formed from a merger in 1898 that brought 114 bakeries under its control, it created the Uneeda Biscuit, a light cracker packaged to seal-in freshness, and a national advertising campaign to sell it. Painted wall signs were a favorite method of getting the word out, and although Uneeda Biscuit signs haven't been painted in decades, many vintage ones are still fading from walls across the country. Another vintage sign shines red neon into the night from the rooftop of the Vineland Municipal Electric Plant after its restoration from twenty years of darkness in 2008. The power plant was built in 1900, and the utility is now the largest municipal power provider in the state.



Vineland's roadside wonders: The 1937 Landis Theater (above left), the Vineland Municipal Electric Plant (above), a Landis Avenue ghost sign declaring that "Everybody Knows Uneeda Biscuit" (left), and the 1932 Palace of Depression's original ticket booth (below).



Wacky Roadside Wonder:

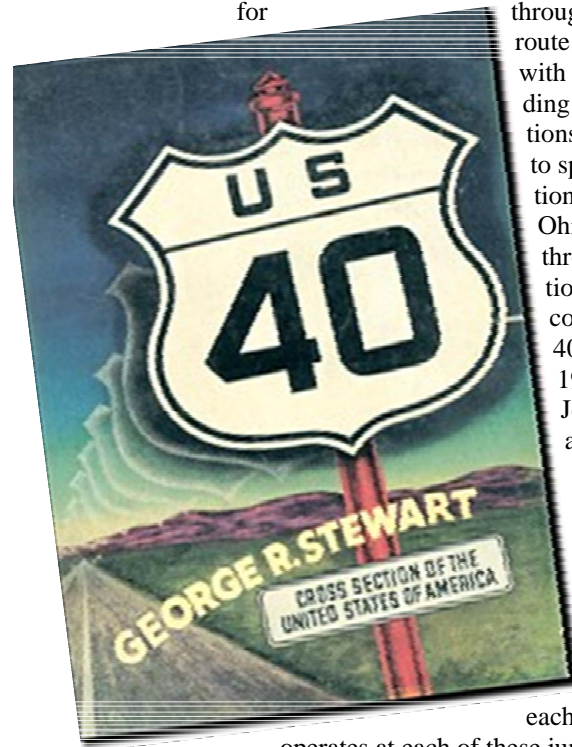
PALACE OF DEPRESSION, VINELAND

In the annals of famous roadside folk art created by quirky thinking artist types are S. P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden in Lucas, Kansas, Simon Rodia's Tower of Watts in Los Angeles, and George Daynor's Palace of Depression in Vineland, New Jersey. Daynor's fantastically whimsical castle-house and roadside attraction would have been more famous had it survived, but the city razed the dilapidated and much vandalized structure in 1969 six years after his death at age 104. Only the Hobbit-like concrete ticket booth, and some benches remain. The Palace's destruction however, has not deterred Vineland building inspector Kevin Kirchner, artist Jeffrey Tirante, and their non-profit Palace of Depression Restoration Project from reconstructing it in the spirit of the original using cast off bricks, stone, glass, and junk. A Klondike gold miner, George Daynor often elaborated on how he lost his fortune in the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, and the Crash of 1929, before being directed by an angel to a swampy junkyard on Mill Road in Vineland, New Jersey, he purchased for \$7. Using truck bodies, car parts, and bits of junk mortared together, Daynor erected his Palace of Depression as a testament to the possibilities of the human spirit, opening it on Christmas Day 1932. For a quarter, Daynor would conduct a tour through the crazy nooks and crannies of his house that included among other things, a wishing well, the Jersey Devil's Den, the Knock-out Room, and tea with the mermaid.



HARDING HIGHWAY, US ROUTE 40

The heart of transcontinental US 40 in New Jersey began as a 19th century market road crossing an agriculturally rich sandy loam plain between Woodstown on the Salem River, and Mays Landing at the old head of navigation on the Great Egg Harbor River. After Atlantic County was formed in 1837, Mays Landing became the county seat, and after Atlantic City was founded in 1854, the road was extended eastward to the shore. With the opening of the Wilmington-Penns Grove Ferry in 1870, the road was extended westward from Woodstown to the Delaware River. By the 1920s, the Atlantic City-Penns Grove road had been inherited by the automobile, and was acquiring new overlapping identities. The state marked it as Route 18-S in 1923, then remarked it NJ Route 48 in 1927. This was the same year Federal Route 40 was extended east from Baltimore and into New Jersey along this same road to Atlantic City. Until the completion of the Delaware Memorial Bridge in 1951, Route 40 crossed the Delaware River over the New Castle-Pennsville Ferry. This crossing opened in 1925 for



through traffic wanting to avoid Wilmington. This route was also part of an early named auto trail with transcontinental aspirations called the Harding Highway. Non-profit, good-roads associations sponsored by special interests were a popular way to direct limited highway funds to specific routes in the early days of the automobile. The Harding Highway Association was formed in 1924, a year after President Warren G. Harding died in office, by Ohio-based boosters who proposed a memorial highway from Washington, D.C. through Harding's hometown of Marion, Ohio, to Chicago, and Denver. The association ultimately mapped out a transcontinental route west from Denver to San Francisco, and east from Washington through Baltimore, and along what would become US 40 to Atlantic City. The Harding Highway showed up on road maps into the early 1930s, but was then virtually forgotten in all but a handful of places, including South Jersey. Route 40 from McKee City to Carneys Point, having never had a strong pre-auto identity, still carries the name Harding Highway.

Route 40 crosses the quintessential Jersey landscape implied by the term "Garden State" that hasn't changed much since George R. Stewart traveled this way for his 1953 book, *U.S. 40: Cross Section of the United States of America*. Rather than the expected Jersey of housing developments, petrochemical plants, and shopping centers, this section of South Jersey is farmland to the horizon, emphasizing such near-market perishables as dairy, peaches, apples, and vegetables, as well as corn, soybean, winter wheat, and the occasional suburban-stimulated sod and nursery farm. The concentration of traffic that occurs where US 40 intersects each of the radial roads from Camden create the perfect diner environment, and a diner operates at each of these junctions. The Malaga Diner faces the intersection with Delsea Drive (NJ 47); the Point 40 Diner sits on the Pole Tavern Circle at NJ Route 77, the Woodstown Diner is just east of NJ Route 45; and the Pennsville Diner operates just south of the junction between US 40, US 130, and NJ Route 49. With the Elmer Diner, these five diners operate along thirty miles of scenic, historic highway.

ELMER DINER, ELMER

The Elmer Diner is a graft made of two separate diners joined together. Its component parts are still discernable, set perpendicular to each other. Coincidentally, the original Elmer Diner was also a graft, made of two 1920s-era O'Mahony dining cars also set in the same L-shaped arrangement. Operating on busy US 40 at the edge of the farm market village of Elmer, the dining cars were replaced in the 1950s by a newer O'Mahony with stainless steel flanks attached to a built on-site kitchen. The diner expanded again in 1972, when a second-hand Kullman Colonial diner was brought from Atlantic City, and used as the main diner. The stainless steel O'Mahony was



remodeled into a dining room. The new restaurant was christened the Concorde Diner, but returned to its original name in the 1980s with the completion of the current stone-faced exterior renovation. Developed in 1962, the Kullman Colonial was the first of a new generation of brick-faced diners to abandon Space Age modernist imagery for such Early American detailing as coach lamps, balustrades, octagonal vestibule windows, faux timber beams, and wood paneled walls. The Kullman Colonial also had two front bay windows that are still apparent on the Elmer. U-shaped booths lined the front windows, the two largest of which projected into the bays. This was also the first Kullman wide enough to accommodate a center row of booths set between the counter and the windows. The wider diner was longitudinally split for transportation with the seam positioned at the peak of the shallow pitched ceiling, a design that would become standard for the next 20 years. New life was brought to the Elmer Diner in 1998 when Sam Aydin became the proprietor.

DINERS AT POLE TAVERN

Pole Tavern is a star-shaped crossroads common to South Jersey where many roads were originally surveyed to radiate out across the flat terrain from tavern-centered villages. Formerly known as Pittsgrove, Pole Tavern refers to the liberty pole that was erected in front of Champney's Tavern at the outbreak of the War of 1812. The tavern burned in 1918, just as the automobile was starting to lay claim to the old wagon roads. Vehicular traffic complicated the six point Pole Tavern intersection necessitating its conversion to a traffic circle, and the inevitable attraction of a diner. The original Pole Tavern Diner was a 1946 Silk City built in Paterson, New Jersey, in the style of all Silk Cities at that time; with stainless steel stripes separated by broad porcelain enamel panels, and capped with a monitor roof. Smoky Wentzell ran the Pole Tavern Diner for a lifetime. By the early 1980s, however, it had been abandoned to rot in a weedy lot. The Silk City was rescued and restored by Steve Harwin's Diversified Diners in Cleveland, Ohio, and eventually landed in Exeter, New Hampshire. Meanwhile in the Pole Tavern, a new eatery rose from the old diner lot. Built in 1985, the roadside restaurant had a number of names and owners before becoming the Point 40 Diner in 1993, owned and operated by Lou and Rena Exadaktilos ever since.

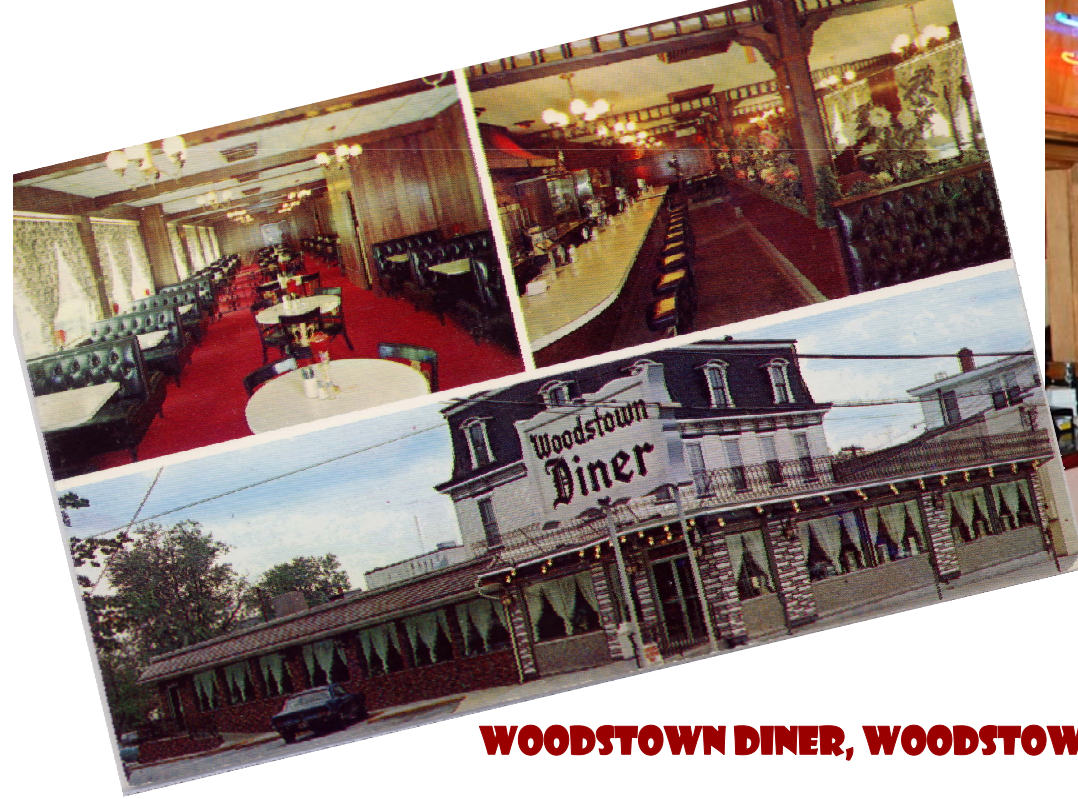


The second generation Elmer Diner was this mid-1950s O'Mahony car now used as the diner's dining room.



A mid-1960s Kullman Colonial was joined to the old remodeled O'Mahony to create the current Elmer Diner.





This postcard depicts the 1966 Fodero that replaced the original Woodstown Diner (left). Long-time wait staff Kay Waddington, Mary Jenison, and Connie Williams stand with current Woodstown owner, Mehmet Ekiz (above).

WOODSTOWN DINER, WOODSTOWN

Woodstown got its diner in 1956, an L-shaped stainless steel diner wrapped around a three-story, Second Empire house that is still part of the property. Owner Gregory Petsas believed in remodeling his restaurant every ten years. In 1966, the original modern stainless steel diner had passed its prime, and was replaced by a white marble flagstone Fodero with huge windows, and a brick-faced dining room extending toward the back of the property. The interior arrangement was still L-shaped, but with an Early American décor of faux beams and wood paneling. In 1976, the Fodero was stoned over, preserving the original window arrangement, and an overhanging mansard roof was added. Poppa Greg -as some of the waitresses remember him- sold the Woodstown two years later, initiating a string of subsequent owners before its 2008 purchase by Mehmet and Fahri Ekiz. The Ekiz brothers are part of the Turkish wave of dinermen operating diners once run by Greeks. Before the Woodstown, the Ekiz family ran the old Trent Diner in Trenton, and the Clairmont Diner in East Windsor. Diner décor, buildings, and owners may come and go, but at the Woodstown the waitresses have long term stability. Mary Jenison has worked there for 40 years, Kay Waddington for 35 years, and Connie Williams for the last 28 years.

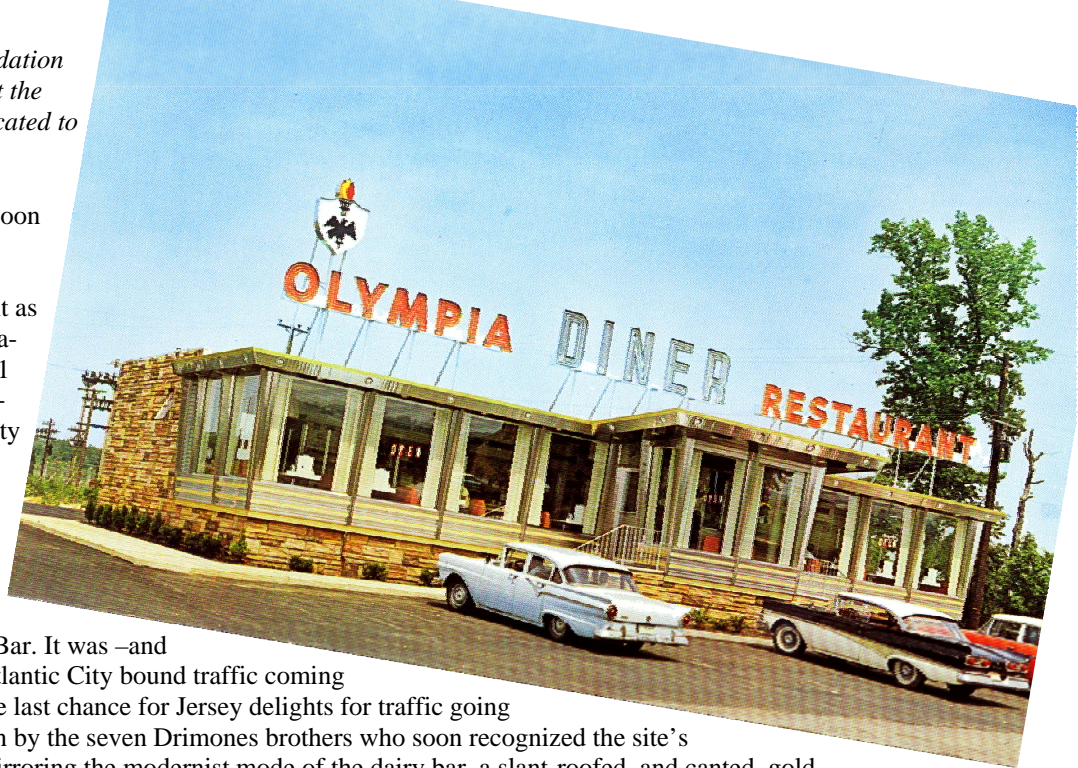
OLYMPIA DAIRY BAR/OLYMPIA DINER, CARNEYS POINT

A quintessentially South Jersey rural roadside nexus operates at the junction of US 40 and NJ Route 48 in Carneys Point. Lapp's Olympia Dairy Bar is particularly popular in the summer when the surrounding fields fill with produce, and cold treats are needed to cut the searing heat and humidity. Next door, the Jersey Farm Market produce stand is announced by a row of homemade signboards stretching down US 40 advertising the upcoming opportunity for BLUEBERRIES, WATER MELON, TOMATOS, and JERSEY SWEET CORN. Between the two, a flagstone faced building and empty foundation marks the site of the old Olympia Diner, which filled out the trio of roadside services most likely to be needed on any trip to or from the Jersey Shore.



The Olympia’s stone-faced kitchen and foundation still stand along US 40 in Carneys Point, but the 1959 Kullman Princess Diner has been relocated to Jessup, Maryland.

The Olympia ensemble originated soon after the opening of what is locally known as “Dual 40.” This two mile stretch of divided highway was built as the US 40 approach road to the Delaware Memorial Bridge after its 1951 completion. Route 40 originally followed what is now NJ 48 and County Route 551 to the Pennsville-New Castle Ferry. The junction of Dual 40 and the old two-lane 40 provided a new opportunity exploited in 1956 by the eye-catching, slant roofed and canted visual front Olympia Dairy Bar. It was –and still is- the first roadside stop for Atlantic City bound traffic coming off the bridge from Delaware, or the last chance for Jersey delights for traffic going the other way. The business was run by the seven Drimones brothers who soon recognized the site’s potential for a full-service diner. Mirroring the modernist mode of the dairy bar, a slant-roofed, and canted, gold and stainless Kullman Princess was brought in as the Olympia Diner in 1959. This was one of three Olympia Diners that eventually took root in the area. The Pennsville Olympia Diner operated in a Mountain View located at Hook Road and Broadway, the pre-bridge junction of US 40, US 130, and NJ 49. This diner was replaced by a Burger King in the 1970s. The long gone Penns Grove Olympia on US 130 was a 1950s O’Mahony previous known as the Penns Grove Diner. The Carneys Point Olympia lasted until 1995 when it was moved to Jessup, Maryland, where it now operates as Frank’s Diner. Its crumbling foundation still stands before the orphaned kitchen building. After folding the diner business, Nick Drimones opened the Jersey Farm Market produce stand. In 2009, the Olympia Dairy Bar was sold to Dan and Anna Ruth Lapp and family who have owned Lapp’s Dutch Market in Penns Grove since 1983.



SALEM OAK DINER, SALEM

The Salem Oak is an idyllic small town diner that sits at the edge of Salem’s Broadway business district. A photograph showing Broadway and the Salem Oak Diner when it opened in 1955 would not be much different than the same picture today. White church steeples tower over this New England-like county seat, and its collection of Victorian and Federalist houses going back to the 18th century. The diner sits across the street from the brick walled Friends Burial Ground established in 1676, which contains the diner’s namesake Salem Oak. Nearly 100 feet tall with branches spreading over a quarter acre, the Salem Oak is a “witness” tree, surviving from before the town was settled by Quaker John Fenwick in 1675. The tree is celebrated in the diner’s oak leaf accented neon roof sign.

By the mid-1950s, Silk City diners like the Salem Oak had abandoned their long-standing monitor roof and broad porcelain panel design for the boxy, stainless steel appearance of their competitors. Silk Cities nonetheless still favored exterior porcelain panels as in the case of the Salem Oak’s blue and pink base. The color combination is repeated on the inside in the ceramic tile counter base, and complemented by the pink and gray mosaic floor. Silk City diners came with a side door that was rarely used, and in the case of the self-contained Salem Oak, small rest rooms were located in the opposite end. The restrooms take up only the front part of the end, leaving space behind for a unique alcove that contains two large booths. The half counter allows for more booth seating in the side door end of the diner, including a



17
Proprietor Christine Zervas at the counter in the Salem Oak Diner.

center row of three deuce booths. Compact and affordable, Silk City diners were popular with entrepreneurs just entering the restaurant business, and even after more than a half century of service the Salem Oak is still museum-quality pristine. Bob and Ollie McAllister operated the Salem Oak in the 1960s and 1970s before the diner passed to their son Bob and his wife Barbara who ran this well-loved local institution from 1975 to 2005. Christine Zervas has owned and operated the Salem Oak since 2007, having had previous experience with the Court House Diner in Cape May Court House, and a deli in Denisville.

**PENNSVILLE DINER,
PENNSVILLE**



The Salem Oak Diner, a 1955 Silk City.

Diner chains are not always as obvious as the commonly named Olympia diners. Many diner entrepreneurs have expanded their business over time by purchasing or investing in other diners without changing their names. Gregory Petsas was one such South Jersey diner moguls. He was both the ‘P’ in Glassboro’s P & B Diner, and the ‘G’ in Pennsville’s G & L Diner. Between the two, he also owned the Woodstown Diner. The P & B and the G & L actually had the same towering coffee cup topped, neon sign, differing only in the initials that were on the cup. Mary Jenison, a 40-year veteran waitress at the Woodstown Diner, remembers starting her career at the G & L around 1960 when a fry vat mishaps caught the diner on fire. She crawled out the front door as the roof ignited. The diner was replaced by a corner-entrance Kullman with white flanks, and canted window struts that is still doing business as the Pennsville Diner. The L-shaped floor-plan of the corner-entrance diner became the standard in the 1960s and 1970s. Through the front door the dining room is to the left, and the diner section with counter is to the right. The layout allows the kitchen to be accessed directly from both

the diner and dining room. The G & L had other lives after Petsas retired, operating as Pier 13, the Golden Gate II, and in 2010 the Pennsville Diner owned by

Ekrem and Melissa Cakmak. Over the years, the Kullman has acquired a large blue mansard roof, some exterior stone and brick, and a completely re-modeled interi-



This postcard view of the circa 1960 Kullman that still operates as the Pennsville Diner shows the transition that was then taking place in diner styles. The G&L’s Early American décor that would come to typify future Colonial diners is still wrapped in the stainless steel skin of Postwar modernity.



The Deepwater Diner, a 1958 Silk City.

DEEPWATER DINER, CARNEYS POINT

The Deepwater Diner is Salem Oak's younger sibling; a 1958 stainless steel Silk City with light blue porcelain enamel strips. The three year lag in diner design was enough to give the Deepwater more stainless, less porcelain, and a slight overhang to the eve that was conservative Silk City's nod to the more flamboyant exaggerated modern designs then being explored by other manufacturers. The Deepwater has the same unused left side door, and broad vaulted ceiling as the Salem Oak, and both diners support large, neon roof signs. The gray ceramic tile counter base, and random-rectangle mosaic floor compliments the turquoise Formica ceiling base and counter top. The most fa-

mous of all interior décor patterns of the postwar Populuxe era was the boomerang pattern that still graces the Deepwater's counter tops.

The diner was set in a large lot next to the Deepwater Truck Terminal, across the street from a power plant, down the road from the DuPont Chambers Works, and just north of the junction where five highways radiate away from the east end of the Delaware Memorial Bridge. The Deepwater was a man's-world diner of circling trucks, and chemical workers coming in and out 24-hours a day. DuPont employed a quarter of Salem County's population before massive layoffs in the 1970s and 1980s. The related drop in customers closed the Deepwater in 1990. Twelve years later, the Deepwater benefitted from the Turkish revival of old Jersey diners when it was re-opened by Nurrettin Turan, and brothers Alaiddin and Saban Ozdemir. Ali runs the Deepwater with help from kitchen chef Bekir Seran, and restaurant manager Angela Harris.

MAY'S HIGHWAY DINER, PENNS GROVE

Even before the 1951 opening of the Delaware Memorial Bridge, the Delaware River ferries at Penns Grove and Pennsville made Salem County the southern doorway to New Jersey. Diners operated on every road emanating from the crossing. Pre-interstate traffic followed US 130 north passed the Deepwater Diner, the Penns Grove Diner, and May's Highway Diner. May's is a Silk City from the previous generation than the Salem Oak and Deepwater, manufactured around 1940. Its corrugated steel façade with broad banner space for the diner name was the standard pre-war design along with its railroad dining car inspired monitor roof, and ventilating transoms over the windows common to an age before air conditioning. The interior décor is a party of colors with a light and dark blue ceramic tile and wall base accented by a row of yellow diamond tiles, and a mosaic floor incorporating these colors in addition to light green and



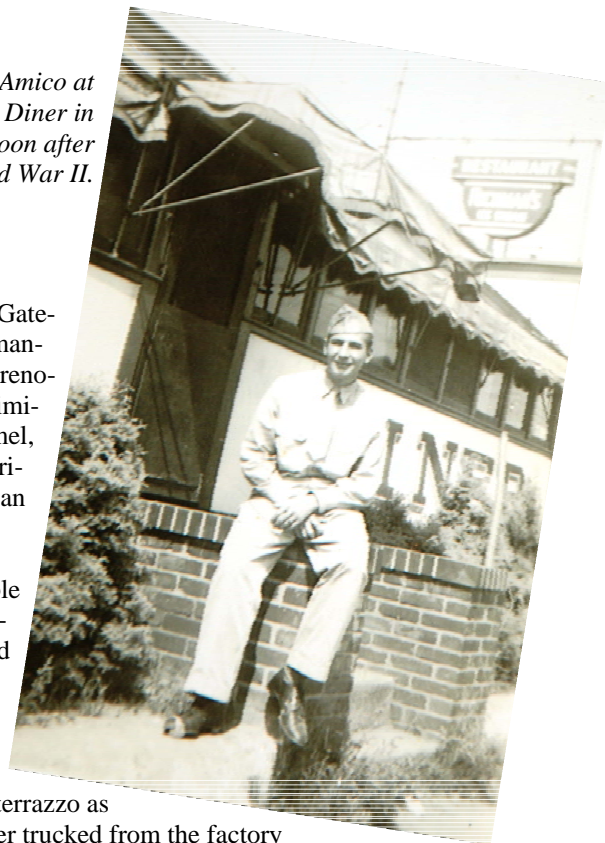
Deepwater Diner restaurant manager, Angela Harris.



The interior of a circa 1940 Silk City outfitted as Penns Groves' short-lived Taqueria la Zacatecana.

black. Although its barrel ceiling, half the counter, and stainless steel backwall remain intact, the interior has been altered in successive remodels, most recently as a short-lived Mexican owned taco place called Taqueria la Zacatecana.

Frank D'Amico at Joe's No. 1 Diner in Westville soon after World War II.



GATEWAY DINER, WESTVILLE

If not for its name, passing motorists might not even recognize the Gateway Diner as anything more than a built on-site restaurant. Bricked up and mansard roofed, the environmental style is a perfect example of 1970s-era diner renovations. The goal was to obscure the building's prefabricated origins, and eliminate all of the modernist influences, like shiny stainless steel, porcelain enamel, and glass visual fronts, in favor of more sedate earth tones, and natural materials like brick, stone and wood. Inside, however, is a diner fan's delight with an unexpected surprise. Beneath the brick, the Gateway is actually a two-diner graft with the well preserved interior of Mountain View #421 attached to an even older diner of unknown origin that was remodeled into a carpet and table dining room during the environmental renovation. The older diner faces Del-sea Drive as the original O'Mahony barrel roof diner did when it first located here before World War II. The Mountain View was set perpendicular to it with an on-site kitchen accessible to both diner parts, and the whole thing unified beneath the brick and mansard. The Mountain View section retains its light blue and pink ceramic tile base counter, and gray and salmon terrazzo floor beneath a recessed ceiling. The initials 'E.G.' are inlaid into the terrazzo as a permanent record of the diner's first owner, Ed Giberson, who had the diner trucked from the factory to the Black Horse Pike in Pleasantville in 1954. Giberson's Mountain View was brought to Westville soon after being replaced by a 1969 Fodero operated as Flaherty's Olympic Diner.

At the time the Gateway Diner was being assembled it was known as Joe's No. 1 Diner, operated by Frank D'Amico. Frank got into the diner business after returning from World War II. By the mid-1950s he owned a second diner on US 130 in nearby Verga. This was a stainless steel Fodero known as Joe's No. 2 Diner, which was still standing forlorn and abandoned behind overgrown shrubbery in the early 1980s. When Frank retired from the business, Joe's No. 1 became Mrs. Lu's Jumbo Wok, and in 1990 four related Greeks re-opened it as the Gate-

way. Ted Poulos and George Frangos joined with their brothers in-law Angelo and Nick Horiates. Recognizing their initials form the word 'GATE' (if Nicholas is spelled in Greek with an 'E'), and that Westville was once known as the Gateway to South Jersey, they settled on the diner's name. Still in the families, the Gateway is now run by Ted Poulos's son Angelo, and George Frango's sons Jimmy and Angelo with plenty of help from other family members.



Angelo Poulos in the Mountain View section of Westville's Gateway Diner.

The Brooklawn Diner is a 1976 Mediterranean style DeRaffele.

**BROOKLAWN DINER,
BROOKLAWN**

Located on the Brooklawn Circle in classic Jersey fashion, the Brooklawn Diner sits in a landscape ensemble that hasn’t changed much since 1976 when the diner arrived from the DeRaffele plant in New Rochelle, New York. True to the times, and similar to the Collingswood Diner on the old Collingswood Circle a few miles up the road, the Greek-run Brooklawn Diner was constructed in the arcaded Mediterranean style with white marble facing, and red clay pan tile mansard roof. It was assembled from six sections noted by the shallow pitch of the ceilings in each set of two sections, which were arranged with an unconventional off-set to each other. The diner section with counter, window booths, and center booths on a large-chunk terrazzo floor faces the traffic circle. The carpeted dining room sits perpendicular and to the left of the diner, but is thrust forward

rather than being flush with the front façade. The left end of the two kitchen sections contains a banquet room that connects to the rear of dining room. The diner was

The ship-shaped South Grove Diner was anchored to the Brooklawn Circle before being demolished for the current Brooklawn Diner.



This view of the Brooklawn Circles was taken soon after the western circle – sometimes referred to as the Gloucester Circle– was constructed in 1946. The filling station on the far side of the circle occupies the location of the current Brooklawn Diner.



Wacky Roadside Wonder:

BROOKLAWN CIRCLE

In the aftermath of the New Jersey Department of Transportation’s decision to redesign most of the state’s 67 traffic circles out of existence, the Brooklawn Circles still stand as an untouched anachronism to bygone highway engineering. The classic circle landscape ensemble includes a gas station, ice cream stand, auto repair garage, bowling alley, and –of course- diner. Total Jersey. The circle dates to the 1920s when it marked the southern end of the Crescent Boulevard bypass around Camden. The Pennsylvania Railroad walled the west side of the circle, and all southbound traffic was directed into Westville where Delsea Drive (NJ 47), Broadway (NJ 45), and Crown Point Road (NJ 44, and later US 130) radiated from an intersection that caused Westville to be called the Gateway to South Jersey. In 1946, a second circle was constructed to the west of the Brooklawn Circle as part of a bypass that redirected US 130 and NJ 45 traffic away from downtown Westville. The bypass replaced a railroad grade crossing with the underpass that separates the two circles, and included an overpass at the US 130-Route 45 split where the long-gone Deluxe Diner once operated. When the bypass was built, US 130 was the main road between New York City and points south for traffic wanting to avoid Philadelphia, a role it would keep until the 1951 opening of the New Jersey Turnpike. The Brooklawn Diner was brought to the circle in 1976, replacing the old South Grove Diner, which itself replaced a filling station that originally occupied the location.

sold to Steve and Gus Millaresis in 1979, and now Steve’s son Dion is actively learning the business.

Up until rust and weather forced it down about five years ago, the Brooklawn Diner was announced by a towering sign inherited from the boat-shaped South Grove Diner that previously operated here since the early 1960s. The original sign was topped by a huge, neon ocean liner beneath which blazed the words ‘South Grove.’ Below that, each letter of the word ‘DINER’ occupied individual circles, and a diving submarine below that carried the word ‘Restaurant.’ The nautical theme may have been inspired by Brooklawn’s origins as Noreg Village, a garden city collection of Tudor houses and duplexes built for workers at the nearby Pusey and Jones Shipyard during World War I.



Although built on-site in 1976, Ponzio’s Diner –now the Metro Diner– reflects the desire of diner builders and operators to push the limits of contemporary restaurant design long after stainless steel fell out of fashion (above). Metro Diner partner, Paul Tsiknakis with the 1949 Courier Post announcement of “Ponzio’s Palatial Brooklawn Diner.” (below)



METRO DINER, BROOKLAWN

With large windows and slanted brick ramparts, the Metro Diner may look like a modern Aztec temple, but its heritage incorporates one of the more famous diners in all of South Jersey –Ponzio’s. A full-page ad was taken out in the *Courier-Post* to announce the opening of “Ponzio’s Palatial Brooklawn Diner Restaurant” on October 27, 1949. This 105-seat, 75’ x 16’ Kullman diner with fluted porcelain enamel facade, rounded, glass block corners, and air conditioning (a boast worth amenity at the time) was described by Kullman Vice President, Harold Kullman (son of founder Sam Kullman) as the “most elaborate installation in the history of our company and the largest [diner] we have ever seen.” Opened by experienced New York area dinerman, James J. Ponzio, the size of the restaurant reflected the postwar significance of suburbanization in South Jersey, and the importance of US 130 as a main line of travel across the state. James, Mike and Nick Fifis bought Ponzio’s in 1958, and soon replaced it with an even larger, multi-section gold, and stainless

Fodero, keeping the well-known name, and emblazoning it on a towering, billboard sized neon sign. Their success allowed them to purchase the Ellisburg Diner in 1964. The Ellisburg was located on a Route 70 circle of the same name in the explosively expanding suburb of Cherry Hill. They renamed this space-age DeRaffele with folded plate eve and A-frame entrance, Ponzio's Kingsway Diner. The DeRaffele was replaced by a stone-faced Kullman in 1979, but the old diner still survives as the Medport, having followed the suburban frontier out Route 70 to Medford. In 1966, George Giambanis (whose son George now owns Bellmawr's Club Diner) became a partner at Ponzio's Brooklawn. Ponzio's made diner news again in 1976 with the opening of the sprawling and stunning, late-modern diner extravaganza that sits there now. The then outdated Fodero was moved to the 295 Truck-Auto Plaza in Pedricktown, and is now closed and boarded up. The next generation of Fifis and Giambanis owners sold Ponzio's Brooklawn Diner in 2002, but retained ownership of the Cherry Hill Ponzio's. In 2008, Ponzio's Brooklawn Diner was closed, renovated, and re-opened a year later as the Metro Diner by new owners, Gerry Tsokantas, Paul Tsiknakis, and Jimmy and Nick Kolovos, who also run the Oregon and Penrose diners in Philadelphia, and are dedicated to reviving this famous Brooklawn institution.



*Ponzio's Brooklawn Diner:
The original 1949 Kullman (top).
The circa 1960 Fodero (middle).
Ponzio's old Fodero relocated to the now closed
295 Truck-Auto Plaza in Pedricktown (below).*

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