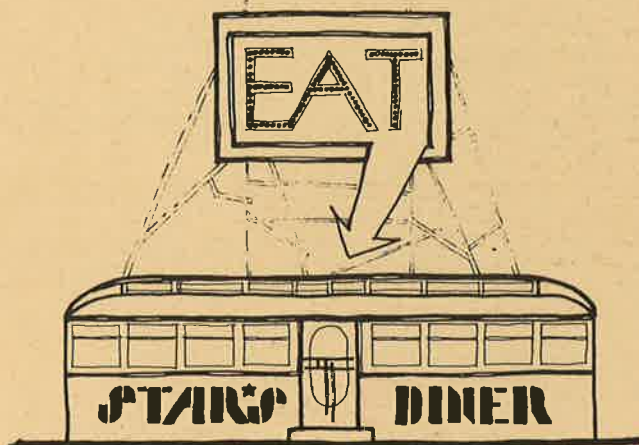


Society for Commercial Archeology

*all Night*  
*all-Night*  
*Diner Tour*



\$2

Written and Prepared by:

DOUGLAS A. YORKE, JR.

Published by:

SOCIETY FOR COMMERCIAL ARCHEOLOGY  
c/o Museum of Transportation  
300 Congress Street  
Boston, MA 02210

April, 1980

THE SOCIETY FOR COMMERCIAL ARCHEOLOGY

presents

*the first all Night  
all-Night  
Diner Tour*

In which lucky participants will visit and experience:

ENGLEWOOD DINER, Dorchester, MA  
HICKEY'S LUNCH CART, Taunton, MA  
SILVER TOP DINER, Providence, RI  
YANKEE CLIPPER DINER, Providence, RI  
MISS WORCESTER DINER, Worcester, MA  
CORNER LUNCH, Worcester, MA  
BOULEVARD DINER, Worcester, MA  
HUDSON DINER, Hudson, MA

*( And other delights too numerous and varied to mention )*

conceived and arranged by:

Mildred O'Connell  
John R. Axtell

your host this evening:

Douglas A. Yorke, Jr.  
SCA President

## INTRODUCTION

Tonight we will be touring one of the last remaining enclaves of diner popularity. In fact, what we will see is the last and purest remaining collection of diner imagery as it was around the time of World War II, before all kinds of new and compromising stylistic modifications took hold. It is a rare find and this should be a landmark tour.

Perhaps the next logical tour should encircle the New York metropolitan area, where the prevailing style is remaining from the 1960s and 1970s, essentially two decades more recent than that of tonight's tour. In New England we will see the pure diner form, with counters and stools, low seating capacity and workingman's fare. In New Jersey we would see 350-seat mega-diners with "semi-private" booths, haute cuisine (whatever that is), and any number of neo-styles that reflect little of the early traditions of the diner. (You may be your own judge of what they do reflect.)

The importance of tonight's tour goes well beyond any assessment of supposed architectural significance. We will not so much be ogling at an incredible example of the monitor roof or the odd marble countertop as we will be participating in the entire diner experience. We will eat; we will drink; we will chat; we will relax and, perhaps most importantly, we will impress upon individual diner owners our profound appreciation for their building, their food and their congeniality. This is diner preservation in its most useful form.

NOW, the meat of the matter: all-night diners in southeastern New England. Mercy, what a tour we have planned. Along our route we will stop at or take note of old diners (circa 1925), new diners (circa 1960), plain diners, flashy diners, big diners, little diners, open diners and closed diners. We will see a Kullman, a Musi, a Fodero, a Sterling and several of our old New England favorite, the Worcester Diner. We will enjoy blueberry pancakes, homemade mac and meatballs, grilled corn muffins, grape-nut pudding and java to raise the Titanic. (The rest-rooms are in the rear of the bus.) Prepare for an experience to remember.

Buckle up, now; *here we go.*

## HISTORY

It is only appropriate that the first-ever official diner tour be visiting the three New England cities that we have charted for tonight. The diner was born in Providence; the early manufacturing developed in Worcester; and Boston obviously was a center of great diner popularity.

The history of diners all started in 1872 in Providence with a man named Walter Scott. Scott modified a small horse-drawn wagon to serve sandwiches, pies and coffee to the late-night prowler. In those days most eating establishments shut their doors by 8:00, leaving the cop, the newspaperman, the theatre-goer and others without any place to dine. Scotty succeeded in solving that problem by offering modest fare through the open window of his wagon to the people out on the street. The popularity of his operation grew rapidly and spawned competition in both Providence and Worcester.

One of these competitors was Sam Jones who, in 1884, opened a night lunch wagon of his own in Worcester. Jones' major contribution came in 1887 when he opened the first wagon large enough to accommodate customers seated inside. After a time, Jones sold his business to Charles H. Palmer who, in 1891, received the first patent on a lunch wagon design. Palmer went into the manufacturing business offering two models, the Star and the Owl, both typical of the pre-twentieth century horse-drawn lunch wagons and predecessors to the diner.

The first real lunch wagon king was also a Worcester man: T. H. Buckley, who at the age of twenty built and opened his first lunch wagon. Within four years he had turned to manufacturing and had already cranked out seventy-five wagons. The company was an incredible success under Buckley's leadership and manufactured a beautifully detailed product, hundreds of them. Buckley's death in 1903 was the beginning of the end for the monopoly which Worcester had held on diner manufacturing.

Come the turn of the century, the focus expanded beyond Worcester as several new companies joined the business: Patrick J. "Pop" Tierney, of New Rochelle, New York; Jerry O'Mahony of Bayonne, New Jersey; and of course the Worcester Lunch Car Co. in Worcester. It was Pop Tierney, however, who dominated the first quarter of this century's diner scene. He is credited with having pioneered the indoor bathroom, tables ("for

ladies") and all kinds of innovations that are a standard part of the diner we now know.

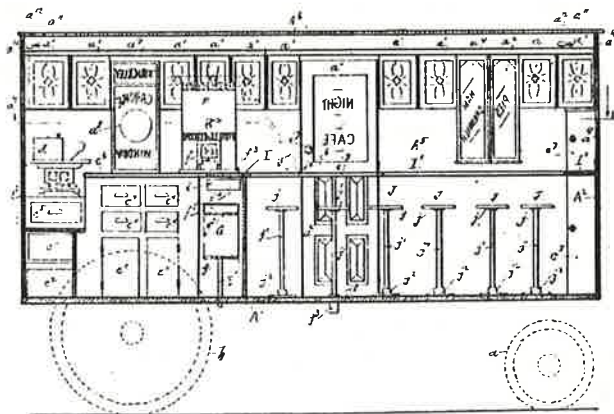


Fig. 2 a.

It is at this time, the mid-1920s, that the image of the twentieth-century diner was distilled. Worcester, Tierney and O'Mahony developed such fierce design competition that they all produced virtually identical diners. The basic form, scale, fenestration and barrel roofline, being expanded motifs from the earlier mobile lunch wagons, were the norm for this period. (Mac's on Columbus Avenue in Boston is perhaps the most indicative of those which we will pass this evening.)

Excepting the equally characteristic monitor roof (whose ribbon clerestory windows repeated passenger train imagery), little change in diner design occurred until the advent of streamlining and the incorporation of modern materials just prior to World War II. Diner imagery following the war picked up right where it had left off. With the exception of in Worcester, stainless steel soon became the prevalent exterior cladding material. The sectional diner, which originated at Sterling Diners in Merrimac, Massachusetts, became the modular diner and construction size was no longer limited by the width restrictions of highway transport. In no time diners were seating 100 or more patrons simultaneously in two, even three, piece diners.

Patent No. 489,893. Lunch Wagon  
Issued to T. H. Buckley, January 10, 1893

In the 1950s, diners turn to sharply angular and folded-plate imagery, using such prevailing colors as turquoise, orange, buff and others. Relics for this period are recognizably "fifties", but are still very much in keeping with earlier diner trends. It is in 1962 that the most dramatic design change in all of diner history appears: The neo-colonial style. The Sixties expanded and gave way to the Seventies, and now, mixed with the ubiquitous franchise architecture of the highway strip, we have Tudor, Mediterranean and probably even neo-Gothic styles in diners capable of seating nearly 400 people.

That is one long trundle from Walter Scott's original horse-drawn lunch cart.

## THE TOUR

### THE BUS

We are riding tonight in the streamlined comfort and efficiency of a restored 1958 General Motors bus. It is one of GM's model PD 4104, termed "the first modern power coach" by the bus *cognescenti*. This particular coach has clocked a respectable 1,200,000 miles in its time. It is presently the property of the Pierce Transit Co. Inc., of Draycut, MA, but it began life with the North Star Bus Lines in Michigan. It has had two other owners prior to Pierce and has done both "line" work and charter work throughout its history.

GM's PD 4104 was produced from 1953 to 1960, and represented a major design revolution in its day. Prior to the 4104, bus design varied little from the earlier scheme of tiny windows and prosaic design common in the 1930s. The 4104 was the first to include in the standard design package large expanses of glass for viewing, fluted aluminum exterior cladding, restrooms and modern air conditioning. The essential design and features did not vary over the course of production, making this evening's ride an experience-of-note in itself. The PD 4104, the first modern power coach.

## BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

*In recent years, Boston has sustained some considerable losses: all the early Hayes-Bickford diners, the Black and Gold, the Baker Boy, Ann's Sub Shop (a late Worcester in the heart of downtown, itself and old Hayes-Bickford), the Garden Diner and even the Kitchenette in a certain respect. Despite the setbacks, Boston remains a good diner city, even a great diner city.*

*All throughout the Boston area are pockets of many excellent diners: Peabody, Salem, Cambridge, Somerville, Watertown, Revere and so on. Towns with good quality single diners include Natick, Dedham, Waltham, Saugus and others. The popularity of the diner remains as strong as ever in Boston.*

ENGLEWOOD DINER      1895 Dorchester Avenue, Dorchester, MA

Evocative of both the imagery and atmosphere of the heyday of diner popularity, the Englewood remains a pristine example of a pre-World War II diner. Once termed "Boston's most interesting all-night restaurant," the Englewood is a Sterling Diner (#4113), manufactured by the J. B. Judkins Co. of Merrimac, Massachusetts. It began life as Daley's Diner at 1211 Adams Street in Dorchester and was moved to its present location in 1946.

Sterling Diners are best known for their "streamliner", a lozenge-shaped diner with its ends rounded in three dimensions to give the startling appearance of sleekness and motion to a stationary object. Such favorites as the former Lindholm's Diner (1941) in Rutland, Vermont (utterly violated in 1975 by the addition of brick siding and a mansard roof), the Salem Diner (1941) on the North Shore and the Modern Diner (1940) in Pawtucket are classic streamliners. Sterling took its streamlining lead from such industry pacesetters as the Chrysler Airflow automobile (1934), the DC-3 and Raymond Loewy's Gestetner duplicating machine (1929) and S-1 locomotive for the Pennsylvania Railroad (1937). Despite its ability to offer the most up-to-the-minute designs, Sterling still made available non-streamlined models such as the Englewood. World War II caught up with the J. B. Judkins Company and, after decades in business manufacturing everything from carriage and car bodies to caskets and diners, they folded in 1945.



HICKEY'S LUNCH CART      southeast corner of court square, Taunton, MA

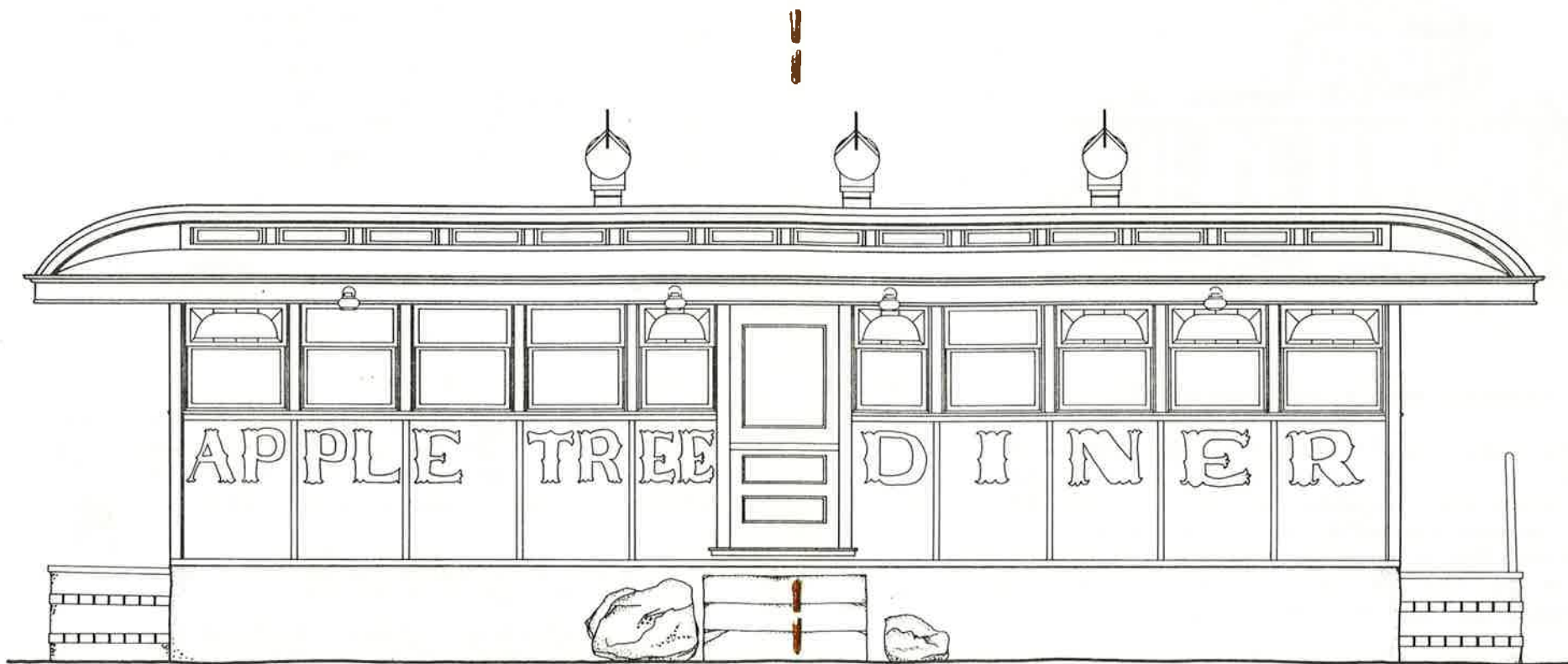
There is little that can be said of Hickey's except that it is a legitimate blast from the past. Squint your eyes and imagine that you're stepping up to buy a wedge of pie and a mug of java from old Sam Jones. (Ignore the truck. Pretend it's a horse.) The lateral counter, the one-man kitchen, the wooden pie rack, the perimeter stools, the whole bloody works is right out of the nineteenth century. And just like the very earliest night lunch wagons, old Hickey pulls into the town square about dusk to service the nighttime trade. A truly great relic surviving in a madcap world. Needless to say, in the wee hours of Taunton nights, chewing the fat at Hickey's is top on the list; a real reward for the late night explorer in us all.



You may want to skip the formal fare here and, as there's good full meals ahead at the Silver Top in Providence (next stop) and the Boulevard in Worcester, you may want to go easy here altogether. Perhaps a dog and whistle berries or just a sinker and suds 'll hold you over.

#### PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

*Providence has recently suffered from a plague of heavily reconditioned exteriors that mask some perfectly good interiors. Thano's and the Seaplane are the most recent. But Providence, like Boston, still has much to offer, including Lloyd's in Johnston which is the last Worcester Diner ever built (#850). Also remaining fairly untouched is the Modern Diner which, while a little neglected, does qualify as the first diner ever to be listed individually on the National Register. A great image, the Modern appears to be a streamlined locomotive careening out of the blank brick rear elevation of the building next door. Finally, Providence offers a continuing, strong tradition in mobile night lunch wagons*



DRAWN BY DOUGLAS A. YORKE, JR. 1980

SOCIETY FOR COMMERCIAL ARCHEOLOGY /  
 BUILDING CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGY, INC.  
 OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

APPLE TREE DINER

WASHINGTON STREET

NORFOLK COUNTY

DEDHAM

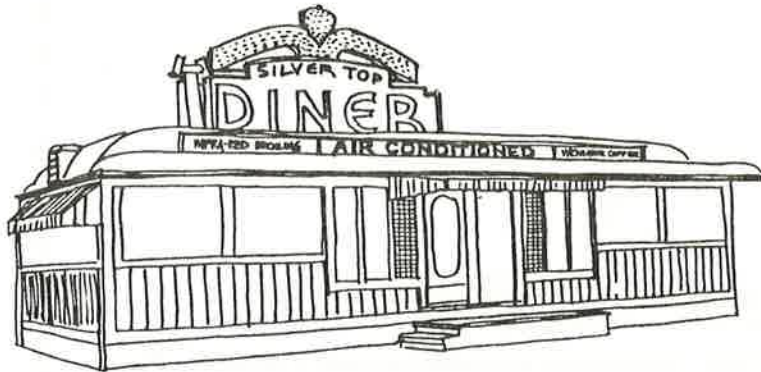
MASSACHUSETTS

SURVEY NO.

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
 BUILDINGS SURVEY  
 SHEET 1 OF 1 SHEETS

COPYRIGHT OF CONGRESS  
 UNDER BUSINESS

which began here over a century ago with Walter Scott. Perhaps the best known today is Mike's, which appears nightly downtown and enjoys a large public following.



SILVER TOP DINER      13 Harris Avenue, Providence, RI

Going back nearly six years ago, an article by Dick Gutman and Peter Richards in the *Sunday New York Times* stirred up a lot of interest in diners. Of the ten which they suggested visiting, we will hit two this evening: the Silver Top and the Boulevard. They advised us to hurry up and sample the Silver Top as an urban renewal-type project was slated to crush it within the next year. Tonight we will happily verify that the calamity has been averted.

The Silver Top is an excellent 1940s Kullman Diner with fluted porcelain enamel, glass block and exceptional interior detailing. Silkscreened details abound, porcelain enamel stool bases, early marbelized formica ceilings, and an entrance to the restrooms and telephone that is literally unmatched in any diner. Unfortunately, the classic overhead sign has been removed, but the essence of the diner remains.

The food at the Silver Top has long been quality stuff, and the new owners are carrying on the tradition. Me, I go for the blueberry pancakes about every time. (Across the street is the produce market which may be fairly active by the time we arrive.)



YANKEE CLIPPER DINER      625 Valley Road, Providence, RI

Abandoned, decrepit, endangered, forlorn.

The Yankee Clipper is (or at least was) a Worcester Lunch Car (#807) dating from 1947. It is about the finest remaining example of Worcester's attempt following the war to mimic its attractive and popular pre-war competitor, the Sterling Streamliner. The imagery of these two types of diner was vaguely similar, but the detailing was worlds apart. Very few Worcester streamliners were ever built, which explains why (or maybe is due to the fact that) the execution of the design is extremely rough and unskilled. The Yankee Clipper lacks the sleekness and well-handled detailing of the Sterling models. It is, however, generally a good example of the heavily streamlined mode of diner design which was common during the 1940s.

#### WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

*Worcester is the true homeland of the New England diner. Out of Worcester came the earliest lunch wagons and the longest lingering attention to hand craftsmanship. Despite the waning numbers of Worcester Diners that were sold following World War II, we have a clear record of their history left in the warmly colored and humanely scaled cars that still pepper the New England landscape.*

*Today, the city of Worcester is the diner aficionado's dream-come-true: diners are everywhere, in almost every style, by almost every manufacturer. Yeah, sure, they're a little run down around town, but they still are an essential part of the social setting of Worcester. That this is true is substantiated by the nearly*

*two dozen diners that may still be sampled around the city.*

MISS WORCESTER DINER      300 Southbridge Street, Worcester, MA

"When, as a freshman, I was handed a list of phone numbers which would supposedly be useful to me during my years at Holy Cross, I found the name Miss Worcester next to one. It wasn't until a week later that I found out that Miss Worcester was the name of a diner and had my first college fantasy shattered.

"Still a freshman, I soon made my first trip to Miss Woo. Walking down Southbridge Street late at night with a few friends, I came upon it about a mile from Holy Cross -- the last refuge before Pigeon Bridge.

"I was surprised and delighted. Just as the city of Worcester belonged fifteen years in the past, so did Miss Woo. It was a real man's diner. Truck drivers with dirty boots and big biceps ate there at all hours of



the day and night. I had once seen a diner like Miss Woo in *The Grapes of Wrath* with Henry Fonda.

"In the years that followed, my weekend affair with Miss Worcester blossomed into a real romance..."

Fred Contrada, *Holy Cross Quarterly*, 5:3-4, 1972

The Miss Worcester is located directly across the street from the old Worcester Lunch Car factory. The present diner is #812 and was installed in June, 1948 replacing the earlier Star Diner that had been on the site. The Miss Woo is similar to countless other Post-World War II Worcester Diners: Tony's Blue Belle (#814) and Charlie's (#816), both located directly across town; the Service Diner (#791) in N. Attleboro, MA;

Wilson's (#819) in Waltham, MA and others. These diners followed the basic pattern of exterior design seen in the Ten Eyck Diner (#768) in Springfield, VT dating from 1941; the Boulevard; the old Kitchenette and a variety of pre-War, barrel-roofed Worcesters.

However, after the war, as New Jersey was going heavily to fluted porcelain enamel, glass block, stainless steel and stylistic streamlining, Worcester stayed with its simple panel design in porcelain enamel. The company's *retardataire* design tendencies (in a consciously image-oriented business) and its use of wood moulding and custom craftsmanship contributed to its demise in 1961.

CORNER LUNCH      133 Lamartine Street, Worcester, MA

The Corner Lunch is a Musi Diner, dating from the late 1950s. In its massiveness, it has all the features of a New Jersey diner of the period. It offers a startling juxtaposition to the Miss Worcester. Most of the distinctive elements will be visible this evening with one important exception: the interior. Diners of this period came equipped with what amounts to an eternal orchid pink glow, a feature surviving from the Art Deco/Rainbow Room era, presumably. This is extremely common in fifties diners and may be found still in the Boston area at the Pig 'N Whistle Diner in Brighton.

BOULEVARD DINER      155 Shrewsbury Street, Worcester, MA

The Boulevard is an old Worcester favorite. One might even say that it is the Worcester favorite. In fact, Arthur Krim, whose credentials along these lines are impeccable, is in complete agreement. That settles that.

The diner, miraculously, has survived clean and unbastardized since its creation in 1934. (If you think that's no mean feat, give a look across the highway. There's a diner over there, same ilk. Bet you can't find it.) The abundance of meticulously crafted woodwork enhances the warm ethnic flavor created by the predominately Italian clientele. It's a little raucous at times, but that's okay. I mean, nobody cares if you've got a couple of dribs of spaghetti sauce on your sweater; that's one of the hazards.

This is the stop you may want to save room for. Good eats are a specialty. The lady in back, Mrs. Boulevard (I'm not sure) makes about 500 pounds of sausage every week and 1500 meatballs. That's barely enough as she sees it. And I'm not surprised. When I'm not feeling like the mac and sausage, the lasagna gets the nod. They cut it so perfectly, straight and square with none of those sloppy edges to hide the precise noodle strata. And for dessert, pure New England: grape-nut pudding.

The Boulevard. It makes a man thank God for the room there is inside of him.

Good food is one of the greatest levelers in a democracy. It is a well-known fact that most diners have it. So, perched on a stool, in any one of the diners scattered around the country, you may find all sorts and conditions of men, yes, and of women too. For if the food is good, people will go the place where it is to be found, even if there is nothing else in the way of attractions. Good food, the very best that is so hard to find; good food, which as John Ridd in "Lorna Doona" said to his sweetheart, after she had served him one of her very best. "There, Lorna, that's a meal that makes a man thank God for the room there is inside of him," that kind of food does not need the embellishment of pretty waitresses, or artistic draperies or immaculate linen. These are all desirable if one wants to pay for them and so satisfy one's aesthetic sense, but good food, superlatively fine food, that tickles the tongue, and rests like a blessing in one's stomach, has the most drawing power. Without the wonder of food these other attractions avail not.

excerpted from an editorial, Diner Magazine, September, 1941

HUDSON DINER      Main Street, Hudson, MA

The Hudson Diner is a Worcester Diner (#789), in what the company called its "semi-streamliner" style (slanted ends, rounded corners). The name is particularly appropriate in this instance as the Hudson has done some real travelling in its time. Its first move was from Worcester to Route 9 in Marlboro, where it began life in 1946 as Larry's Diner. Thence a move a little farther out Route 9 to Framingham. And then finally it was brought by William van Buskirk in 1955 to its present resting place in Hudson. When installed, it replaced Mr. van Buskirk's earlier 14-stool Worcester Lunch Car. New panels were added at that time to emblazon "Hudson Diner" across the facade and, other than the addition of a large kitchen to the rear, the Hudson is a pristine example of a Worcester Diner.

The meals are tasty here, served over one of those super Worcester marble counters (only I can't remember whether it's black or the more typical dark tan...oh well, it's good anyway). Good food, good counter, good diner.

## THE ALL NIGHT DINER

As read on the Fred Waring Show, June 29, 1948

I suppose you think nothing could be finer  
Than running an all night diner.  
One of those compact money-makers that doesn't need  
Acres of ground to be a success.  
And get along on less  
Than 300 square feet, including a place to store  
Meat, and 16 stools, and the famous pools for drinking  
Water. At times it gets hotter than Hades.  
But hungry ladies and gents  
Can get something to eat for five cents or five  
Dollars. While the fellow behind the counter yells,  
"Draw One!" and, "Butter on a Bun" all night long.  
The coffee's usually strong but that's what you want  
When you hunt for an all night diner.  
And maybe a guy with a shiner sitting at the end  
Waiting for some men, and pulling down his hat to  
Cover it. And, maybe an ardent lover, pouring out  
His soul over a bowl of clam chowder, and talking  
Louder than he thinks, while the girl next to him  
Blinks in appreciation of his confession of love.  
And maybe a tired old electric fan above  
So loud that nobody can hear you  
When you ask for the salt which is never near you!

In a diner you must know what you're after.  
The menu is up on the rafter, and you order fast, or  
You'll wind up last.  
If you want an egg, you'll have to shake a leg,  
And, if you want cheese on white, you can't wait  
All night. You state your desire, because the guy's  
Got things on the fire. He has to be dishwasher,  
Cook, and waiter, and clean out the refrigerator,  
And mop up the floor and yell "Shut the door" when  
Some guy lets in a cold breeze.  
He has to please everybody who stumbles in and  
Turn mumbles into orders for food.



He mustn't be rude or shout, even when he throws a  
Guy out! About once every hour, he must hear someone  
Say, "This milk's sour". But instead, the thing  
That's bitter is the disposition of the stool sitter  
Making the objection.

A guy in the diner gets a good cross-section  
Of life in the early A. M. and if he wrote a book  
It would be a gem.

But he's probably too tired to be very inspired.  
When the day's work is complete.

What he wants is to get off his feet and go to sleep.

But he doesn't count sheep

No, he counts continuous arrivals,

The truck drivers, who keep yelling all day and

All night -- "Hey, I'll have a cup of java."

Do you still think nothing could be finer

Than running an all night diner?



## ASSORTED ADDITIONAL DINERS IN THE REGION

### Boston vicinity:

#### Bob's Diner

82 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA

#### Apple Tree Diner (1930 Worcester Lunch Car)

702 Washington Street, Dedham, MA

#### Salem Diner

326 Canal Street Extension, Salem, MA

#### Casey's Diner (tiny Worcester; excellent)

Natick, MA

#### Pig 'N Whistle Diner

226 N. Beacon Street, Brighton, MA

#### Town Diner

162 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA

### Providence vicinity:

#### Mike's Diner (modern night lunch cart)

Providence, RI

#### Champ's Diner

1338 Park Avenue, Woonsocket, RI

#### Jigger's Diner

143 Main Street, E. Greenwich, RI

#### Lloyd's Diner (last Worcester ever built; 1957)

2760 Hartford Avenue, Johnston, RI

#### Modern Diner

13 Dexter Street, Pawtucket, RI

### Worcester vicinity:

#### Chadwick Square Diner (early Worcester, "Tables for Ladies")

1475 Main Street, Worcester, MA

#### Tony's Blue Belle Diner

45 Prescott Street, Worcester, MA

#### D and T Diner (Sterling)

179 Chandler Street, Worcester, MA

#### Uncle Will's Diner (classic truckstop diner)

U.S. 20, Shrewsbury, MA

#### Lou-Roc's Diner (Silk City)

1074 W. Boylston Street, Worcester, MA

