



Jersey Diners & Burgers Claim Introduction at 1939 World's Fair - The White Mana

Posted on March 27, 2025

Views: 2,180



Where was the White Mana at the 1939 World's Fair in Flushing Meadow, New York? Is this an urban legend, or does it have some legs? Our researchers now had a mission.

Mr. Local History Researchers have yet to find a contract, a photo, or a map showcasing what some claim was the “*Diner of the Future*” at the 1939 World's Fair. Nothing on the walls, nothing digital. And we're not the first to say so.

If you find ANYTHING – POST A COMMENT at the end of this story.

As with all Mr. Local History retrospectives, we often update the post when we learn stories and are sent photos from our community. We will continue to expand this piece as information becomes available. If you have any stories to share, please post in the comments section at the end of the piece.

Here's what we're still looking for:

For Jersey City White Mana

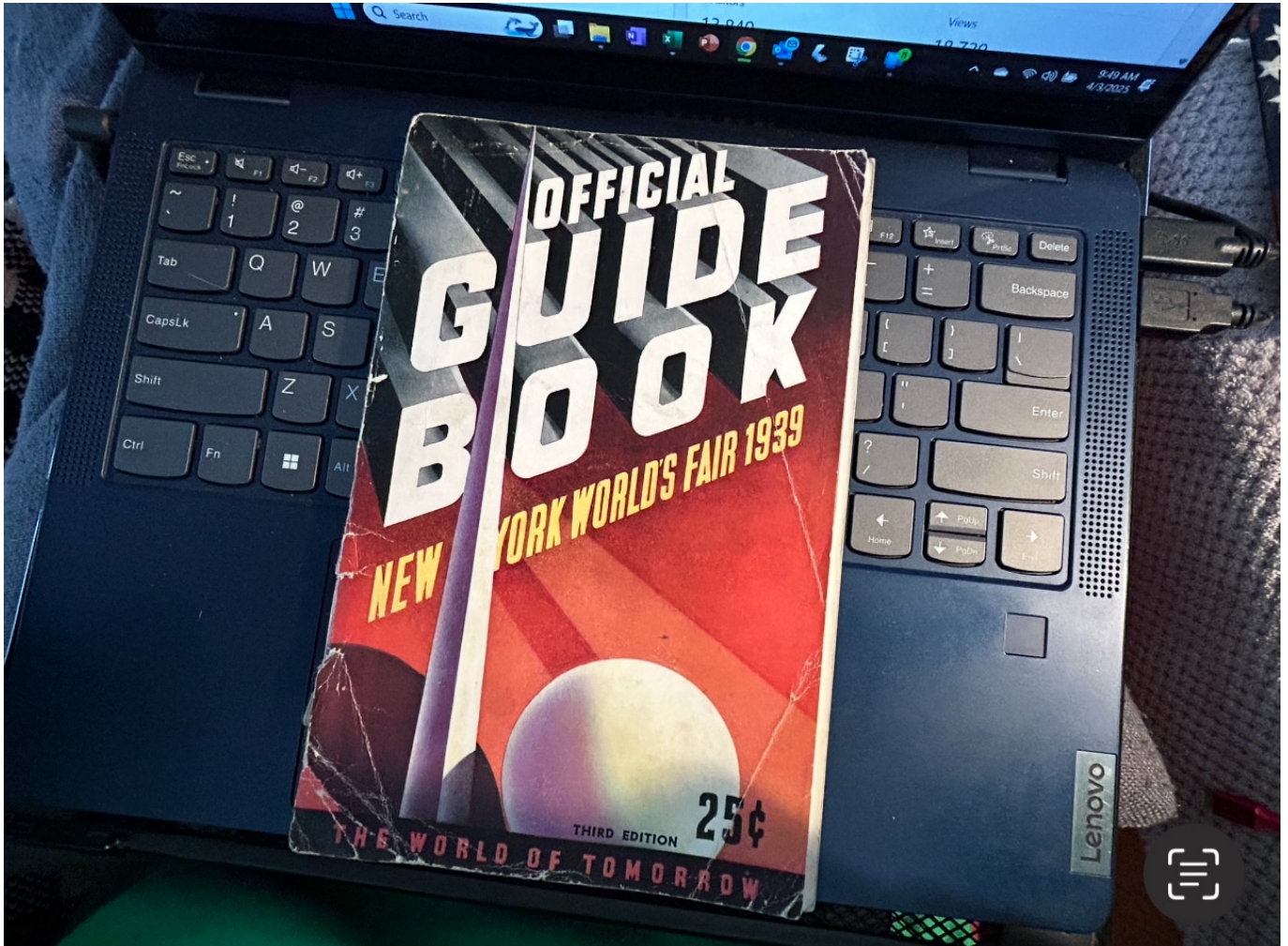
- Photo of the diner at the 1939-1940 World's Fair in Flushing Queens, NY.
- Photo of the Paramount Diner Car Company manufacturer plate
- Photo of the diner AT the 1939 World's Fair

Mr. Local History Project – [Contact Us](#)



Update: April 2, 2025

Again, we come up short. This time, we purchased an official 1939 World's Fair Guide Book with over 250 pages of information. There was nothing listed about this claim that the structure was at the World's Fair—so is it a rose? Pure Marketing? Or are we just missing something? We'll continue to dig.



Jersey City's White Mana - Some Claim a World's Fair Journey



Good researchers must dig in to find the truth in every story. This was a fun one!



Opened on June 2, 1946, offering ten-cent hamburgers. The carhop service to five a.m., begun in the 1950s, was discontinued in the 1980s. The current owner, Mario Costa, born in Portugal, bought the diner for \$80,000 in 1979 from Louis Bridges' brother, Webster Bridges.

Our curiosity began when we were preparing a story about the New Jersey White Diamond hamburger chain that we heard turned 75 in 2022. So we started researching that event. Then, that story took a twist when we found a contradiction to that story. What were we missing? As history students, once that thread was pulled, there was no turning back.

Burger Background

Our story starts when we found a 1937 advertisement in New Jersey's The Record Newspaper. The ad was for a "White Diamond" restaurant with one establishment in Hackensack and another in Elizabeth, selling a novel hamburger nicknamed "the Slider." However, what was inconsistent was that these White Diamond diners were there 9 years earlier than the Clark, New Jersey, anniversary. We thought, "Wait, wouldn't that make the White Diamond 84 years old?" Hmmmmmm.....



1937 Advertisement highlighting the earliest White Diamond ad we've found.



5 HAMBURGERS

Special Trial Offer
At All White Castles

10¢

On
"Carry-Out"
Orders Only

*For Limited
Time Only
During Hours
Specified
Below*

This advertisement is to help acquaint you with the advantages of following the White Castle Slogan, "Buy 'em by the 'Sack'". Take the attached coupon and only 10c to any White Castle listed therein, during the hours specified. You will receive a bag containing 5 full size delicious White Castle Hamburgers of the usual high standard and quality which sell regularly for 5 cents each. This special offer applies to "carry-out" orders only; obviously, it would be impossible to provide counter service for the thousands who take advantage of this coupon. You will see how clean and inviting is the interior of a White Castle. Then you will continue to be a White Castle customer and that will repay us for this special inducement.

CLIP COUPON HERE NOW

5 Hamburgers for 10c on "Carry-Out" Orders Only
Between 2 P.M. and Midnight daily, until Midnight Sunday, May 19, 1940
ONLY ONE COUPON HONORED PER PERSON

Any child or adult may present this coupon with 10c at any White Castle listed below during the hours specified above and receive a bag containing 5 regular White Castle Hamburgers. This coupon applies to "carry-out" orders only. The regular price of 5 cents each will be charged for each Hamburger served at the counter.

If you wish more than the 5 Hamburgers provided for in this coupon, the White Castle Attendant will be glad to sell you as many more Hamburgers as you desire, at the regular price of 5 cents each.
Remember U. S. Government Inspected BEEF delivered daily, is the **ONLY** meat used in White Castle Hamburgers. Buy 'em by the "Sack".

CLIP COUPON HERE NOW

BE SURE
THE SIGN SAYS
WHITE CASTLE

White Castle
A NATIONAL INSTITUTION SYSTEM, INC. ESTABLISHED IN 1921

307 Elizabeth Ave.; at Hawthorne Ave. (Newark)
655 Frelinghuysen Ave.; at Lowell Pl. (Newark)
Edgar Rd. and Bacheller Ave. (Linden)
Springfield Ave. and Rutgers St. (Maplewood)
Westfield Ave. and Elmora Ave. (Elizabeth)
Main and Flaget Avenues (Clifton)
Hudson Blvd. and Bergenline Ave. (North Bergen)
Central Ave. and Scotland Rd. (Orange)
Edgar Rd. at Milton and Paterson (Rahway)
Bloomfield Ave. and Pompton Turnpike (Verona)



This 1940 White Castle ad was found in the Bergen Record newspaper. Interesting how similar it looks to the 1937 White Diamond advertisement. Hmmmmmmm.

Two New Jersey newspaper ads, one from 1937 and one from 1940, show they might be the same. White Castle ads had been in NJ as far back as 1933. Strange as other stories state, White Castle didn't arrive in NJ until 1935. This was 12 years before the White Mana opened in 1946. Could the White Diamond and the White Castle be the same? Hmmmmm.



SIDEBAR: Jersey Hamburger History

The first New Jersey White Castle opened on August 16, 1935, at [9271 John F. Kennedy Blvd, North Bergen, NJ](#), and was the overall ninth location opened by White Castle founder E.W. Ingram. The first White Castle opened in Wichita, Kansas, in March 1921. Nungessers is where several roads converge, specifically where JFK Boulevard, Boulevard East, Bergenline Avenue, Fairview Avenue, Anderson Avenue, and Woodcliff Avenue meet.

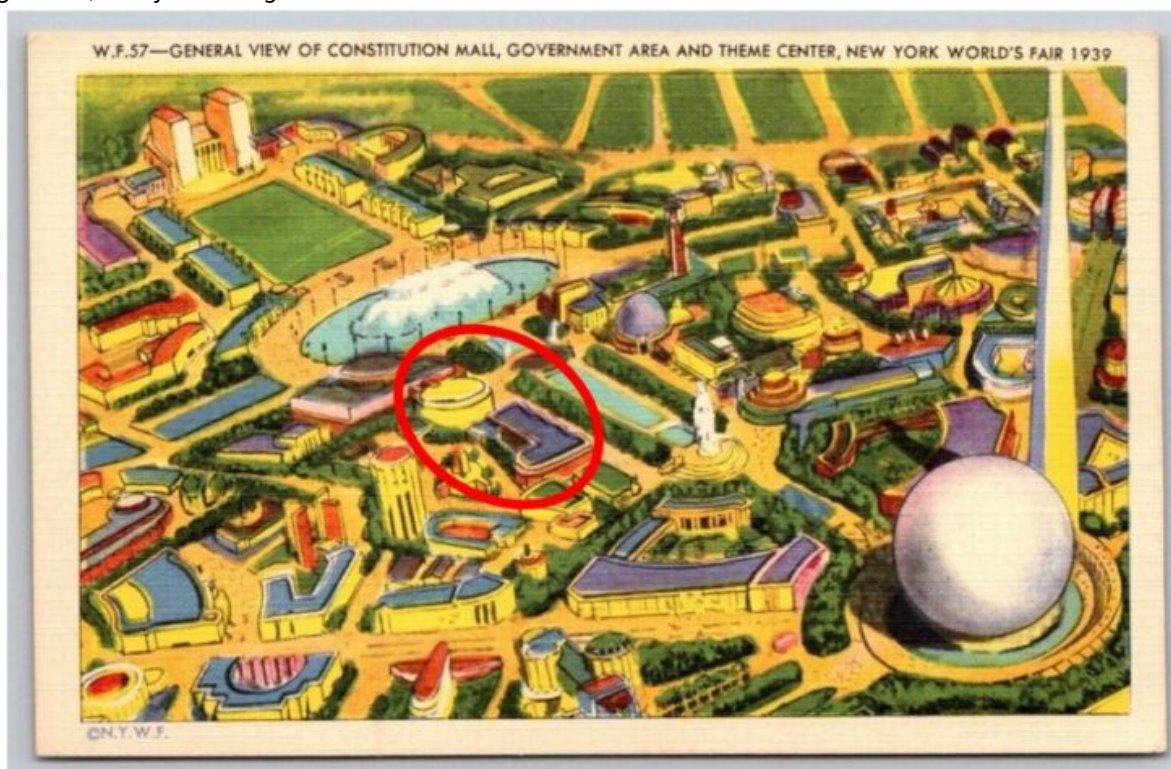
Many references have noted “the slider” creation to the White Castle burger chain, others believe it also belongs to a person we’ve come to reference as “Burger Royalty in New Jersey”. Louis Bridges and the Bridges family, farm boys from Cordele, Georgia (150 miles south of Atlanta) who moved to northern New Jersey and created three of New Jersey’s most iconic burger chains: the White Diamond, White Manna, and yes, the one ‘N’ removed White Mana.



Hamburgers at the 1939 World's Fair – What About the White Mana?

While our White Diamond ad hails from 1937, our research led us to the 1939 World's Fair in Flushing, Queens, New York. Anyone who has experienced a World Fair can compare the 1939 fair to something from Walt Disney's Land of the Future. One of the futuristic attractions at the fair was the ***"diner of the future,"*** an exposition focusing on a dining experience like no other.

Heralded as the "World of Tomorrow," the 1939 World's Fair international exposition ran for two seasons, opening on April 30, 1939, in Flushing Meadows Park and closing on October 27, 1940. Industrial designer Russel Wright directed the construction of the Food Focal Exhibit. Situated on the main esplanade between the theme center and the U.S. Government Building, the Food buildings held prime real estate in the fair's spatial arrangement, likely boosting its foot traffic.



Red Oval – Food Focal Exhibit – possible area of "Diner of the Future" – Building the "World of Tomorrow" pavilion.

The 1939 World's Fair was the second-most expensive American world fair, exceeded only by St. Louis's Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. The opening slogan of "Dawn of a New Day" allowed visitors to look at "the world of tomorrow". Television was demonstrated for the first time. To convince skeptical visitors that television sets were not a trick, one set was made with a transparent case so that the internal components could be seen. As part of the exhibit at the RCA pavilion, television sets became available for public purchase at various stores in New York City during this formal introduction at the fair.

Introducing the "Hamburg" at the World's Fair

Americans were ready for what the World's Fair coined "fast food," synonymous with hamburgers and hot dogs.



Betty Grable's 5 Cent Hamburger at the World's Fair article on December 19, 1939, shows actress Betty Grable preparing hamburgers, wearing a chef's cap and apron. The article reported that high food prices at the New York World's Fair kept thousands of people away. Most damaging was the rumor that Fair hamburgers were \$1.25 each (actually, they were \$0.05). This article suggested that the Fair publicity department should have sent out pictures such as Grable eating 5-cent hamburgers to counteract the damage done by the rumor. Betty Grable is remembered for starring in the 1939 film "[Million Dollar Legs](#)."



Actress Betty Grable promoting 5 cent hamburgers at the 1939 World's Fair.

When World War II began four months into the 1939 World's Fair, many exhibits were affected, especially those displayed in the pavilions of countries under Axis occupation. There were seven fair zones: Amusement Zone – 280 acres, Communications and Business Systems Zone, Community Interests Zone, **Food Zone**, Government Zone, Production and Distribution Zone, plus the Transportation Zone. The Food Zone showcased American companies' latest technology and products, featuring many brands on store shelves today. Taylor Pork Roll was exhibited for the first time as part of the "Taste of Tomorrow" exhibits, noted by acclaimed food, design, and travel writer Mimi Sheraton. Another new marvel of food innovation that caught her eye was the Nabisco Icebox Cake (one of my favorite desserts).

1939 World's Fair Paramount Diner Car World of Tomorrow Pavillion Exhibit Claim

Here's where history gets a little sketchy. If you've seen photos of Jersey City's White Mana, there is a clear



statement that this was the diner at the 1939 Flushing Meadow World's Fair. The visionaries of the New York World's Fair believed that the exhibits of the thematic zones would have lasting social consequences upon national life. If this were to prove true, however, the exhibits not only needed to be seen but also be personally impactful. In E. L Doctorow's novel, the Borden's and Heinz exhibits made the best impression. The Food Focal Exhibit sought to convey science and technology's "miraculous" impact on the human diet by making production methods more efficient,



White Mana states that they were at the 1939 World's Fair. Now we're looking for proof. Above is what's called the [Trylon and Perisphere](#) icons at "The World of Tomorrow" 1939 World's Fair in Flushing Meadow Queens, NY. The name "Perisphere" was coined using the Greek prefix *peri-*, meaning "all around", "about", or "enclosing". The name "Trylon" was coined from the phrase "triangular pylon." Neither structure survived.

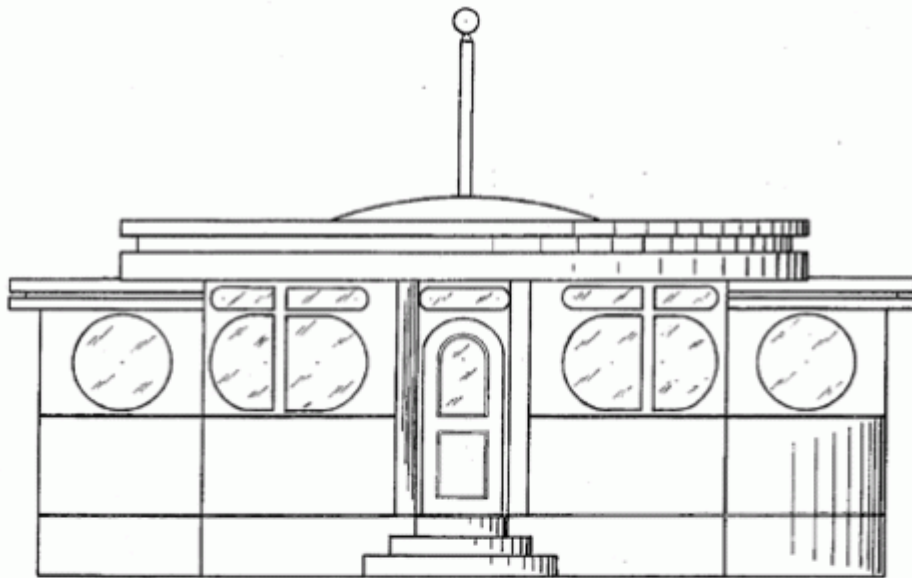


Fig. 1.

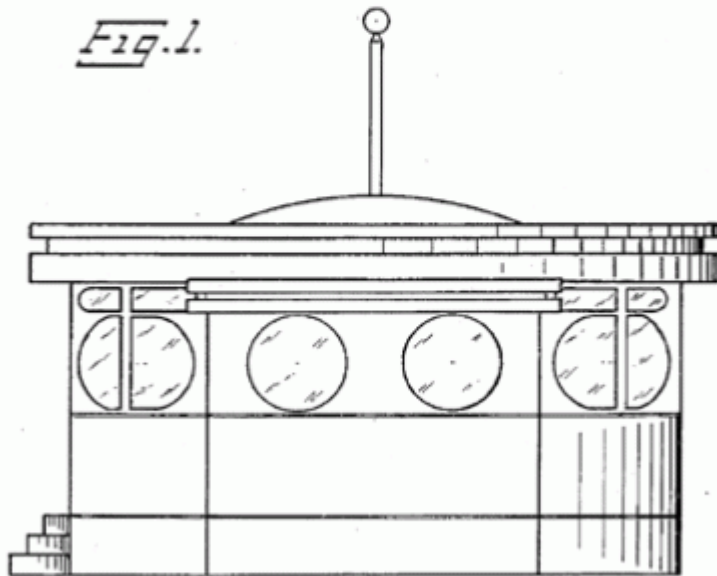


Fig. 2.

ARTHUR E. SIEBER.
INVENTOR

BY *W. Hoyt Young*
ATTORNEY

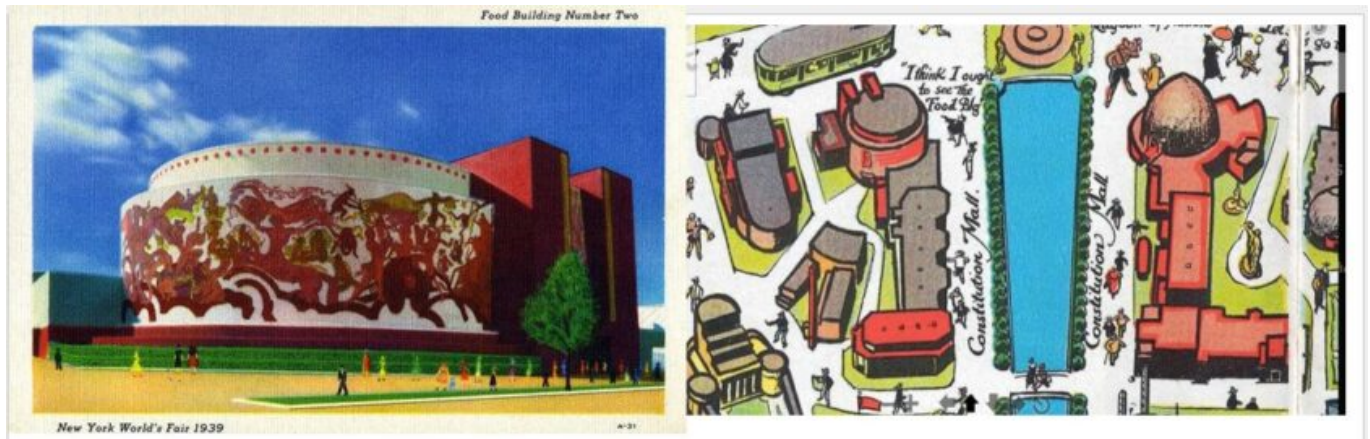
1939 White Mana World's Fair Diner Design – Arthur E. Sieber Paramount Dining Car Inc.

That White Mana World's Fair Claim

Planning for the Flushing Meadow, New York 1939 World's Fair started in 1935. Over the next four years, the World's Fair Committee planned, built, and organized the fair and its exhibits. The eyes of the Fair were focused



“on the future,” not in the sense of peering toward the unknown nor attempting to foretell the events of tomorrow and the shape of things to come, but in the sense of presenting a new and clearer view of today in preparation for tomorrow; a view of the forces and ideas that prevail as well as the machines. The exhibit was called *“Building The World of Tomorrow.”* Diners and fast food were part of that vision.



The Food Focal Exhibit was designed by Russel Wright & Associates and built by Modern Art Crafts, Inc. It was housed in Food Building #3 in 1939, which became the Coca-Cola Pavilion during the 1940 season. Situated on the main esplanade between the theme center and U.S. Government Building, the Food buildings held prime real estate in the fair's spatial arrangement, likely boosting its foot traffic. Tony Sarg's souvenir World's Fair map illustrates the central position of the food buildings. But AGAIN, no documented proof of the structure has been found at the 1939 World's Fair.



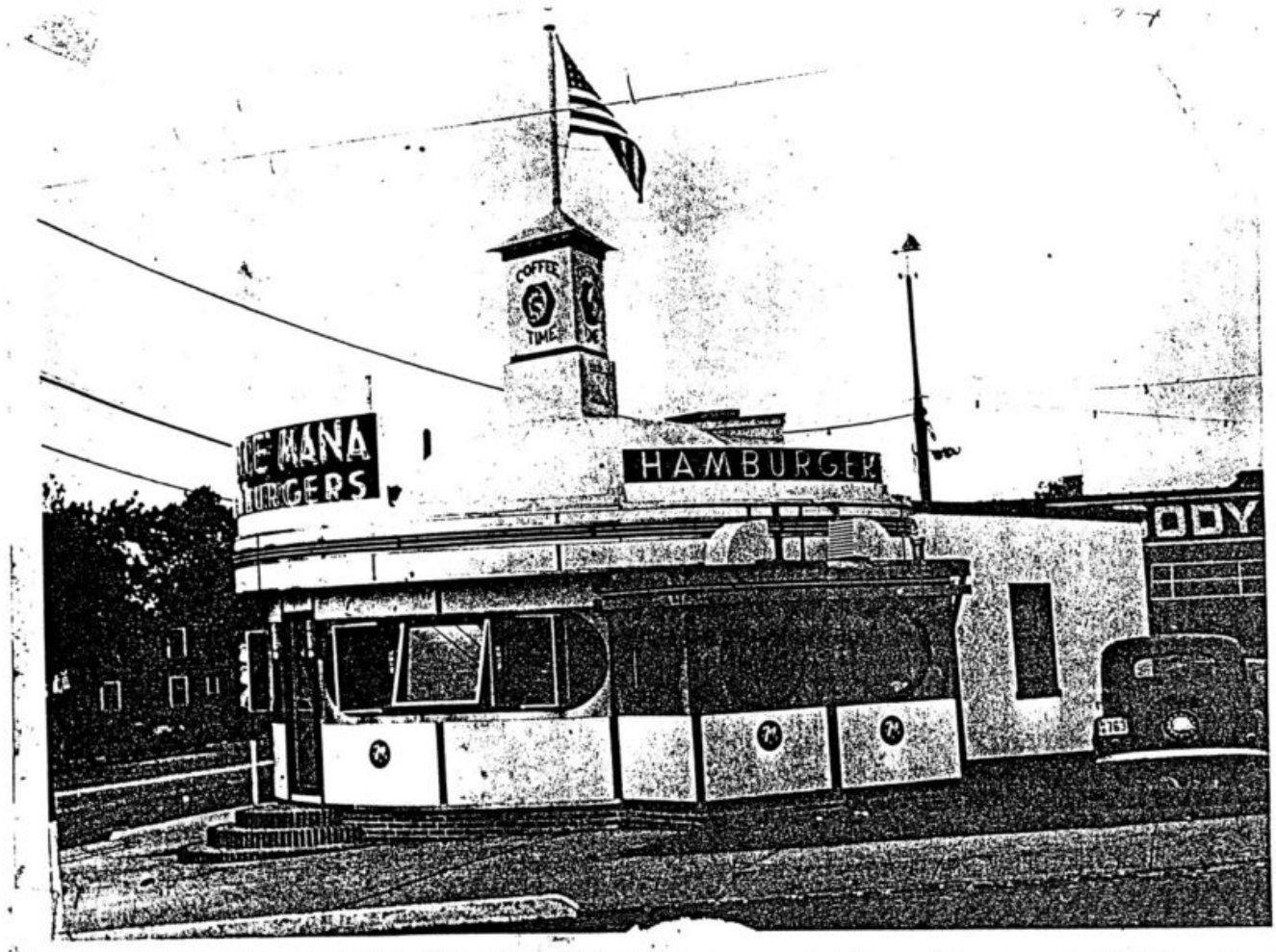
Figure 4: Example of manufacturer tag seen in the Aetna Diner.



Arthur E. Seiber's patented diner tag and clock were signature manufacturing symbols from the Paramount Dining Cars Company in Haledon, New Jersey. MLH continues to search for the original tags from these two historic diners. If anyone knows the location of these tags in either Manna diner, we'd love to see it.

1946 -The Spaceship-Looking Diner Lands in Jersey City

While the "drive-in" hamburger stands in other areas had already taken off, designs like the White Mana faltered. After the fair closed in 1940, many exhibits were demolished or removed, including the alleged "Diner of Tomorrow" in the "food zone." But what we do know is that a Paramount Diner ended up in the hands of a Louis Bridges.



While the “missing N” story is fun, MLH found this 1946 photo of the White Mana in Jersey City. It was the “White Mana” all along. Source: Webster Bridges/SHPO.

“Our White Mana sign originally had two Ns. Coca Cola used to service our signs, and one day they bought it back with one N. They misspelled it and it stuck.” Regardless of its spelling, the name has both biblical and historical references to the affordable food “mana” [sic] in a sanitary “white” establishment during the Depression. The single “n” would stick with future Bridges family diners.

Mario Costa, White Mana owner since 1979 on the “one N” mana in Jersey City



Opened on June 2, 1946, offering ten-cent hamburgers. This was a later edition.

Louis Bridges - New Jersey Burger Royalty

Here's where we finally introduce you to Louis Bridges. Supposedly, Louis attended the 1939 World's Fair and saw something that changed his restaurant approach forever. After seeing the Paramount Diner Experience and the "Dining of the Future" experience, he negotiated with the World's Fair and the Paramount Diner Car, Inc. of Haledon, New Jersey, just north of Paterson, and purchased the exhibit.

The diner design by Arthur Sieber supposedly debuted at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Filed in 1937 and issued in 1938, the patented portable diner structure was promoted as the "diner of the future" and an "Introduction to Fast Food." Arthur E. Sieber began Paramount Dining Cars, Inc. in Haledon, NJ, during the Depression, after working for years at the nearby Silk City Diner Company. Paramount Diners adopted stainless steel and Formica, a brand of laminate invented in 1913, as an insulating product for its diner surfaces, such as countertops, tabletops, and ceilings. Since 1963, the Paramount Diner Car Inc. has been under the helm of Herbert Y. Enyart, who, like Sieber, had previously worked at Silk City Diners (formerly Paterson Vehicle Company).

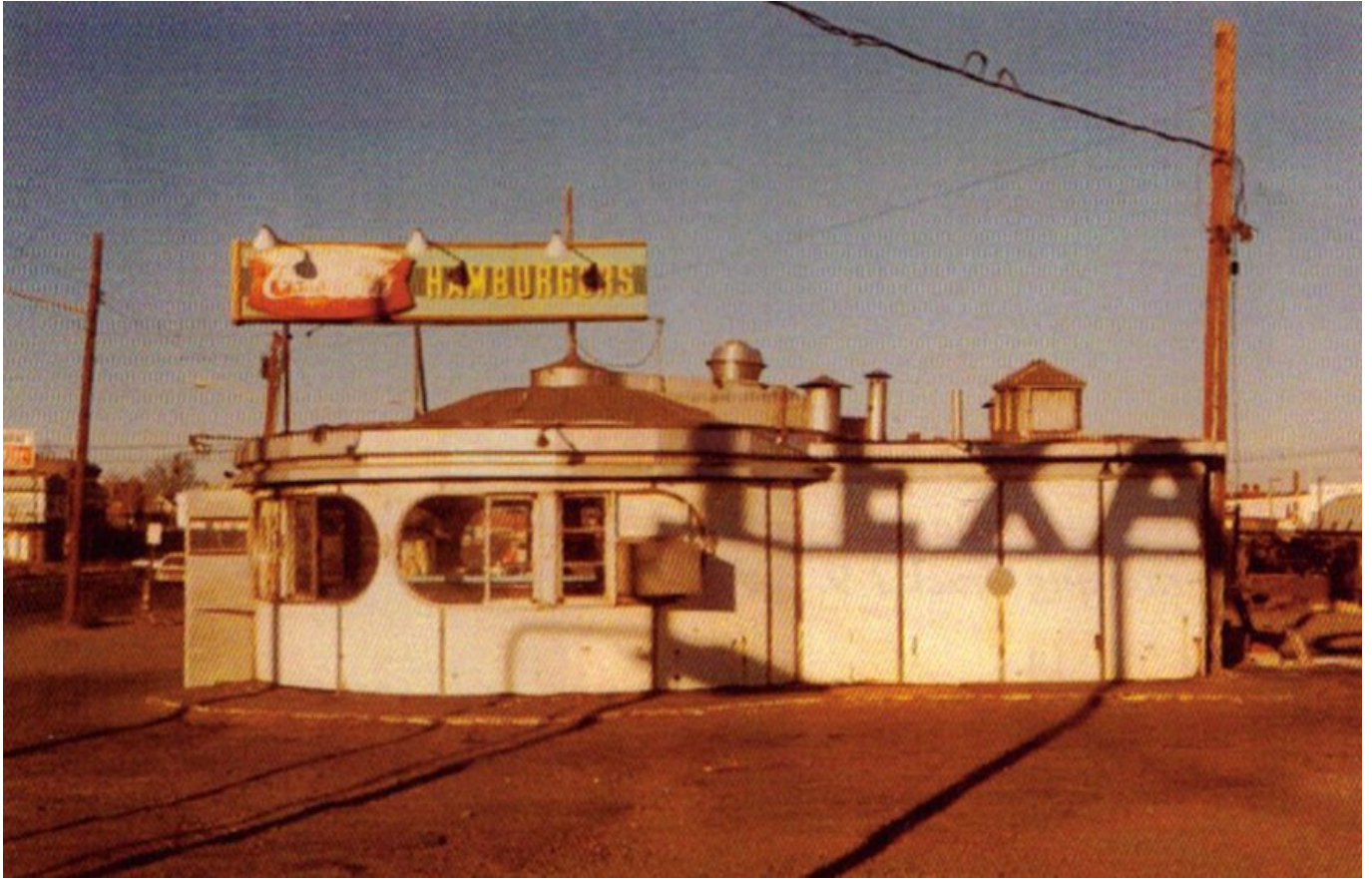


From Warehouse to the Street

Rumor has it that this Paramount diner was most likely dismantled in 1940 and stored in two pieces until after WWII. It wasn't until 1944 that Louis Bridges purchased the diner. Finally, in 1946, Bridges started opening more diners, and a final location was selected for the "spaceship diner" at 440 Tonnelle Avenue in Jersey City, where the two pieces were assembled. As they say, the rest is pure Jersey history that not only continues today but honors the legacy of burgers at a diner; a state with more diners than anywhere else in the country; New Jersey – the World capital of diners!

This **"Diner of the Future"** futuristic design centered around a large grill and circular counter, meaning the server could cook a burger and hand it to the customer in three steps. It wasn't just one of the earliest examples of fast food, but also – according to White Mana's current owner, Mario Costa – of the slider, so named because the cooks would slide the burgers across the large grill.





Opened on June 2, 1946 offering ten-cent hamburgers.



Jersey Diners & Burgers Claim Introduction at 1939 World's Fair - The White Mana





Jersey Diners & Burgers Claim Introduction at 1939 World's Fair – The White Mana





Jersey Diners & Burgers Claim Introduction at 1939 World's Fair - The White Mana





Proclamation

WHEREAS, White Manna of Jersey City stands apart from most fast food places because it was the original BIG IDEA: its round building was designed and used in the 1939 New York World's Fair; and

WHEREAS, White Manna's concept - introducing fresh food to the public in an efficient manner - was masterful: 12 stools encircled the kitchen area, with not more than three steps from food to customer; and

WHEREAS, White Manna's name is even special: "white" connotes cleanliness and purity, while "manna" is literally Greek for "bread from heaven"; and

WHEREAS, White Manna was purchased by Louis Bridges in 1944 and delivered in two sections. It was assembled two years later on Routes 1&9 in Jersey City and opened on June 2, 1946. (White Castle on the Boulevard hadn't opened until 1948!); and

WHEREAS, White Manna, is currently owned by Mario Costa, who bought the diner from Louis' brother Webster in 1979. Once part of a five-diner network, it is the forerunner of large hamburger chains existing today. Unfortunately, Louis Bridges was killed in a car accident before his dream came true; and

WHEREAS, White Manna of Jersey City has been featured in two books, Diners and Old New Jersey. Registry is imminent in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places, bringing its stature to full glory.

THEREFORE BE IT PROCLAIMED by County Executive Robert C. Janiszewski, County of Hudson, State of New Jersey, that

White Manna of Jersey City
50th Anniversary

BE, AND IS, HEREBY OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGED AND CELEBRATED for its forward-thinking design of the production and distribution of healthy food in a timely manner.

DATED: June 2, 1996

ROBERT C. JANISZEWSKI
Hudson County Executive





Proclamation: 50th anniversary June 2, 1996

The White Mana diner was once targeted to be added to the New Jersey Register of Historic Places (The “Original Mana” Diner (ID#3843) 464 Tonnelles Avenue. SHPO Opinion: 8/22/1989. While White Mana is a historic landmark in Jersey City, deemed on June 2, 1996, via a proclamation from Hudson County Executive Robert Janiszewski, it still is NOT on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

White Manna – White stands for purity, Manna is, according to the Bible, an edible substance which God provided for the Israelites during their travels in the desert during the 40-year period following the Exodus and prior to the conquest of Canaan.

Definition of a White Manna – See video below.

The Paramount Diner Car Company manufactured the walk-up diner for Louis Bridges in nearby Haledon, NJ. It opened in 1946 in Hackensack, New Jersey. (I am still looking for a photo of the diner plaque typically riveted inside each diner.)

Related Mr. Local History Jersey Foodie Stories

Search Our Site and See What Might Be Here – over 500+ researched history in our database.

Search



#Jerseyfoodie
Mr. Local History Project



[Jersey foodie – Take a look at all the stories on Jersey food](#)

[The Brothers' Bridges and Their Family's New Jersey Burger Dynasty](#)

[Ultimate Jersey Burger Crawl Challenge on the Jersey Burger Trail](#)



[The White Diamond Chain – New Jersey Burger Royalty](#)

[Hackensack's Historic White Manna Honored With Miniature Wooden Collectible](#)

[Retrospective: White Tower Hamburger System – In Search of New Jersey Locations](#)

[Deep Dive: Krug's Tavern – Preserving Newark's History](#)

[Honoring Four Historic New Jersey Eateries](#)

[Talkin' Smash Burgers in New Jersey](#)

[Remembering Howard Johnson's](#)

[Legendary Jimmy Buff's Italian Hot Dog – A Newark, New Jersey Invention](#)

[Retrospective: Newark's McGovern's Tavern- An Irish History Tale](#)