

# Oak Cliff History

## Stories of Important Happenings and Events in Oak Cliff's Past

### Pig Stand Earns Five Oinks for Innovation

One good invention deserves another. In the early 1920s Texan Jesse G. Kirby observed something interesting about the growing automobile phenomena, "People with cars are so crazy they don't want to get out of them to eat." Like any good entrepreneur he put brain to problem and came up with a moneymaking idea. In 1921 he partnered with a doctor named Ruben W. Jackson and opened a restaurant on Chalk Hill Road in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas. But it wasn't an ordinary restaurant. It was the first restaurant to offer curbside service. Hungry customers drove up to the curb in their Model T's and were met by a 12 or 13-year-old boy dressed in a white hat, a white shirt, and wearing a black bow tie. The boy hopped up on the running board and asked what the driver wanted to eat. After securing the order, the boy ran into the restaurant, placed the order, returned to the car and hopped back onto the running board to deliver the goods. People called these kids "carhops". The eatery, named the Pig Stand, was the first ever drive-up restaurant. Early versions of the Pig Stand were simple square buildings with a barbeque pit in the back. They were built close to the street so customers could drive up to the curb for service. As the popularity of Pig Stands grew, the restaurants evolved to include both awning-covered drive-in service (instead of drive-up) as well as limited counter service. These later versions were set back from the curb and featured a distinctive red-tiled pagoda-like roofline.



Early Pig Stand Drive-In 1940s  
Started in Oak Cliff

It wasn't only the drive-in service that made the Pig Stands popular. They also served tasty food. Besides hamburgers and sandwiches, they soon became known for their signature Tennessee barbeque pork sandwich called, appropriately, a Pig Sandwich. Advertising slogans for the restaurants included, "Quick Curb Service," "America's Motor Lunch," and "Eat a Pig Sandwich." A 1927 newspaper ad claimed that 5000 meals a night were served at Pig Stands in Dallas alone. It encouraged the hungry public to "Join the 5000 and avoid the bother of the evening meal."

As Pig Stands became more and more popular they grew to over 100 restaurants. Most were in Texas but some were as far away as Los Angeles. The innovative "carhops" and drive-up service would be enough to put Pig Stand in the history books, but Kirby's

innovation didn't stop there. Taking a cue from the early success with drive-up and drive-in convenience, Kirby tried something new in 1931 – drive-through service. This innovation caught on slower than the drive-in service, but the concept hung on, kept growing and became the lifeblood of the fast food restaurants of today.

Other “firsts” for the Pig Stand included the first restaurant use of neon signs, the first use of florescent lighting (to support nighttime sales) and the first restaurant to use air conditioning -- an absolutely essential innovation for scorching Texas summers.

But wait, there's more. The Pig Stand also altered America's taste pallet forever with three more scrumptious innovations. In 1929 a clumsy Pig Stand cook accidentally dropped a ring of onion destined for a hamburger into a bowl of batter. He fished it out – thought for a moment, and instinctively plunged it into a nearby vat of hot cooking oil. The result was mmmmm, tasty. The battered onion ring became an instant hit and a permanent addition to the Pig Stand menu (as well as to menus all over America.)

The second culinary inspiration came twelve years later, in 1941. A man by the name of Royce Hailey, who got his start as a carhop, now ran the Pig Stand Company. At one of the restaurants in Beaumont, Hailey had an inspiration. With the idea of making his toast more substantial, he asked the local Rainbow bakery to make his bread a little thicker. The bread that arrived was *too* thick. It wouldn't fit into the restaurant's toaster. Not to waste anything, the cook suggested slathering the bread with butter and toasting it on the grill. The result was another mmmmm tasty moment. Hailey dubbed the new creation “Texas Toast.” Another permanent Pig Stand menu item was born, and restaurants all over the world soon picked up on the idea. A final notable innovation came a few years later when a breaded and fried steak was placed between two buns and became the Chicken Fried Steak sandwich. Today, there is hardly any Texas restaurant worth its salt that doesn't have onion rings, Texas Toast and a Chicken Fried Steak sandwich on its menu. Unfortunately for Hailey, none of these items were trademarked. However, the Pig Sandwich *was* trademarked and became the object of lawsuits as late as 1992 when the Pig Stand successfully stopped the Hard Rock Café from using the name.

Although there had been more than 100 Pig Stands from coast to coast in the 1930's, World War II brought an end to the expansion. Over a period of years, only the Pig Stands located in Texas remained. Royce Hailey became sole owner in 1975 and in 1983 his son Richard took over the company. The few remaining Pig Stands are now mostly in the Houston, San Antonio and Beaumont areas. They provide a measure of nostalgia for seasoned Texans and a glance back at a tasty piece of history for a new generation of Pig Stand customers. Today, Friday nights at selected Pig Stands rock with songs from the 50's and 60's as nostalgia seekers in vintage cars park under the covered awning to sample the food that made the Stand famous. If they're lucky they will also be visited by Pig Stand mascot Charlotte, the dancing Pig. Oooo-eeee, it can be so exciting that it will make your tail curl.

Next time you're cruising around San Antonio visit these Pig Stand locations – 807 South Presa Street, 1508 Broadway and 3054 Rigsby Avenue. In Beaumont visit Pig Stands at 3695 College Street and 1595 Calder Street, in Shelbyville on FM2694, in Lytle at 19525 McDonald Street, and in Houston at 2412 Washington Avenue.

- Alan C. Elliott