

The Feed Bag Drive-In Restaurant

The era of the drive-in restaurant, for those of us old enough to remember, was a much simpler time. There were no drive-throughs, no computerized ordering, the employees probably didn't wear uniforms, and debit or credit cards were not used to pay for the food and beverage order. Orders were written on small pads of paper and delivered by waiters, or in most instances waitresses, known as car-hops. The order was carried by the car hop on a tray that would conveniently fit on the partially rolled up car window of an automobile.

According to one source, "The drive-in restaurant concept, where patrons are served food in their vehicles, dates back to pre-World War II. The concept reached its height of popularity in the early 1950's." The first drive-in restaurant opened in Glendale, California in 1936.¹

One particularly significant drive-in restaurant that many long time Martin County citizens may have fond memories of was the *Feed Bag Drive-In*. It was easily identified by its flashing neon walking chicken sign prominently displayed in the front of the establishment. The sign eventually evolved into being called the "*Kickin' Chicken*" sign. The *Feed Bag Drive-In* was located at 2421 Albion Avenue in Fairmont, approximately across the street from the Hall Lake Cabins. It was originally built by Art Godfredson and called "*The Spot*." Later owners included Gustie and Jack Croissant, Tom and Freida Rake, Ron and Nancy Milbrandt, and Gerald and Eleanor Wagner (later Eleanor Chase and Harry Chase) who purchased it in 1958 and operated it until 1977.

Several former car hops from that era, Kathy Christenson, Gerianne Izen, and Heidi Villeneuve-Schlomann, provided some perspective on that time and place in local history. They worked at the Feed Bag while attending high-school during the early to mid-1970s when Harry and Eleanor Chase were the owners. Their pay at that time was \$1.45 per hour plus any tips. Their work attire didn't include uniforms, but was generally comprised of shorts, tennis shoes, and a type of carpenter's apron with separate pockets for pennies, nickels, dimes quarters, and dollar bills. They took orders from the cars and served their customers on trays that rested on the partially rolled up car window. Some of the most popular foods included Danish hot beef sandwiches, french fries and later tater-tots, as well as potato salad. Fried chicken-in-a-basket was a favorite of many as well. They enjoyed working at the *Feed Bag* because of its relaxed atmosphere, being able to work with their friends, and their appreciation of the many regular customers.

¹ <http://inventors.about.com/od/inventionsalphabet/a/restaurants.htm>

A few unique experiences they encountered included fighting over certain customers that were known to give good tips (usually a quarter) and not wanting to dump the “slop bucket” at the end of the night. Also, as a result of the lot being a gravel surface, a rock would frequently lodge under the screen door when they would attempt to gently kick or nudge it open as their hands were full holding the tray they were returning. This caused the door to spring right back in their faces, which they considered both hilariously funny and awful at the same time.

According to a previous owner of the *Feed Bag*, beverages served included *Richard's Root Beer* and 3.2 beer. It was at that time the only local drive-in restaurant at that time to sell 3.2 beer, which was served inside the restaurant.

The *Feed Bag* Drive-In restaurant is no more, nevertheless, those nostalgic memories of that era undoubtedly linger in the minds of those who worked there and the customers that frequented the restaurant. Those reminiscences would certainly include the favorite foods, the friendly service provided by the car-hops, and the many friendships established during that moment in time in our local history.

Although the *Feed Bag* no longer exists, its memory lives on and is symbolized by the “*Kickin' Chicken*” neon sign. That sign was originally salvaged by Warren Nelson in 1975 when he found it in a ditch on Albion Avenue awaiting pick up by garbage haulers. From 1975 to 2003 the sign journeyed to a number of very different locations. Those travels included being the backdrop for musical performances at the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua in Bayfield, Wisconsin, and the Fairmont Opera House. It was also stored at Warren Nelson's parents' basement, it found its way back to the *Feed Bag* restaurant for a time, later it went to a barn on a farm south of Fairmont when the restaurant closed, and finally it was placed on loan to the Martin County Historical Society by Warren Nelson in 2003.

The final chapter of this rather lengthy saga occurred in December of 2012. At that time, the sign became a permanent fixture in the Pioneer Museum thanks to the generosity of Marlin Milbrandt who donated funding for its purchase. Consequently, it is now permanently displayed in the Pioneer Museum for the benefit of those many patrons, car-hops, and others that remember it, as well as for future generations to enjoy.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member of the MCHS, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.



FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

PHONE 238-2428

FOR TAKE-HOME ORDERS

THE FEED BAG DRIVE IN

IN FAIRMONT



2421 ALBION AVENUE

FAIRMONT, MINNESOTA

DINNERS

CHICKEN IN THE BASKET	^{1/4 - 1.95} 1.35	^{1/2 - 2.85} 2.15
SHRIMP IN THE BASKET	^{1st & fries} 1.35	2.95
FISH STICKS	1.00	1.95
(French fries, salad, roll and mint with above)		
STEAK SANDWICH DELUXE	70c	1.25
PORK TENDERLOIN DELUXE	70c	1.80
VEG. HAMBURGER DELUXE	60c	1.10
WHOLE COW SPECIAL	65c	1.10
(French fries with above)		
BAKED HAM & POTATO SALAD	70c	1.20
BLIMPS	40c	.85
CORNY DOGS	25c	.65

Ice Cream Specialties

MALTS (C P S V)	30c	SUNDAES (C P S)	75c ^{.45}
SHAKES (C P S V)	⁴⁵ 30c	FLOATS	75c ^{.40}

Drinks

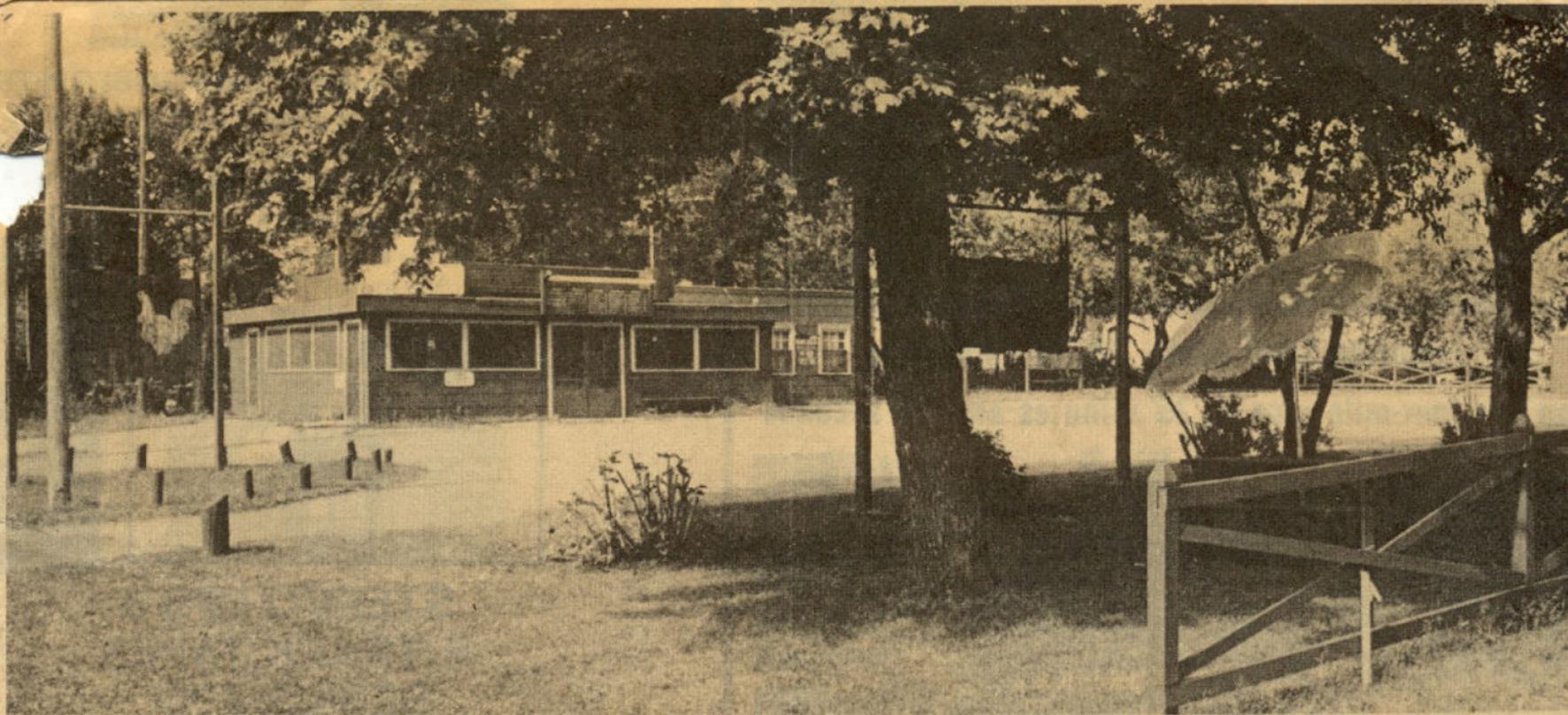
COFFEE	10c ^{.20}	ROOT BEER	10c & 15c ²⁵⁻³⁵
TEA (Hot or Ice)	10c ^{.15 30}	MILK (Choc. or White)	10c ^{.20}
POP	15c ^{.30}	CONES	10c ^{.10}
LEMON-ORANGE Dr.	10c	BEER	30c
^{4 grape} 20-30		Hot choc. - .30	

SANDWICHES

PORK TENDERLOIN	50c	^{1.5}
STEAK SANDWICH	50c	^{.9}
BAKED HAM	50c	^{.9}
SHRIMP STEAK	50c	^{.8}
FRIED CHICKEN SANDWICH	50c	^{.6}
HOT DANISH BEEF (Pickles or Onions 5¢ Extra)	40c	^{.8}
SEABURGER	40c	^{.7}
WHOLE COW	40c	^{.7}
VEGETABLE HAMBURGER	40c	^{.7}
CHEESEBURGER	35c	^{.6}
HAMBURGER (Works 10¢ Extra)	30c	^{.5}
CHICKEN SALAD	25c	^{.6}
TUNA SALAD	35c	^{.6}
EGG SALAD	30c	^{.5}
BAR-B-Q	30c	^{.5}
FOOT LONG HOT DOG	35c	^{Big Fries} ^{.8}
HOT DOG	20c	^{.3}
ZIP DOG	25c	^{.5}
CHEESE SANDWICH	25c	^{.5}

Extras

FRENCH FRIES	25c ⁴⁰	BEANS	10c ^{.25}
TATER TOTS	25c ³⁰⁻⁴⁰	POTATO SALAD	20c ^{.40}
ONION RINGS	50c ^{7.5}	VEG. SALAD	25c ³⁰⁻
		cole slaw	25c ^{.35}



FEED BAG DRIVE IN

Located at 2421 So. Albion on ideal hard surfaced road. Building could be converted to other

**For Your
Convenience**

Phone 1680-X

**For Take
Home Orders**

THE FEED BAG DRIVE IN



IN FAIRMONT

**Ron and Nan Milbrandt
South of Fairmont on Hwy. 15
Fairmont, Minn.**

DINNERS



CHICKEN IN THE BASKET	\$1.35
FRIED SHRIMP IN BASKET	\$1.35
FISH STICKS	\$1.00
<i>French Fries, Salad, Mint and Roll With Above Items</i>	
STEAK SANDWICH DELUXE	70c
VEGETABLE HAMBURGER DELUXE	55c
<i>French Fries With Above Items</i>	
BAKED HAM & POTATO SALAD	70c
BLIMPS	35c



ROOT BEER	5c & 10c
COFFEE	10c
MILK <i>Choc. or White</i>	10c
Root Beer Floats	20c
SUNDAES	25c
<i>Strawberry or Chocolate</i>	
POP	10c
BEER	25c
HOLY COW	20c

CANDY — GUM — CIGARETTES
ICE CREAM NOVELTIES



SPECIAL

Take-Home Boxes of Chicken and Shrimp!

SANDWICHES

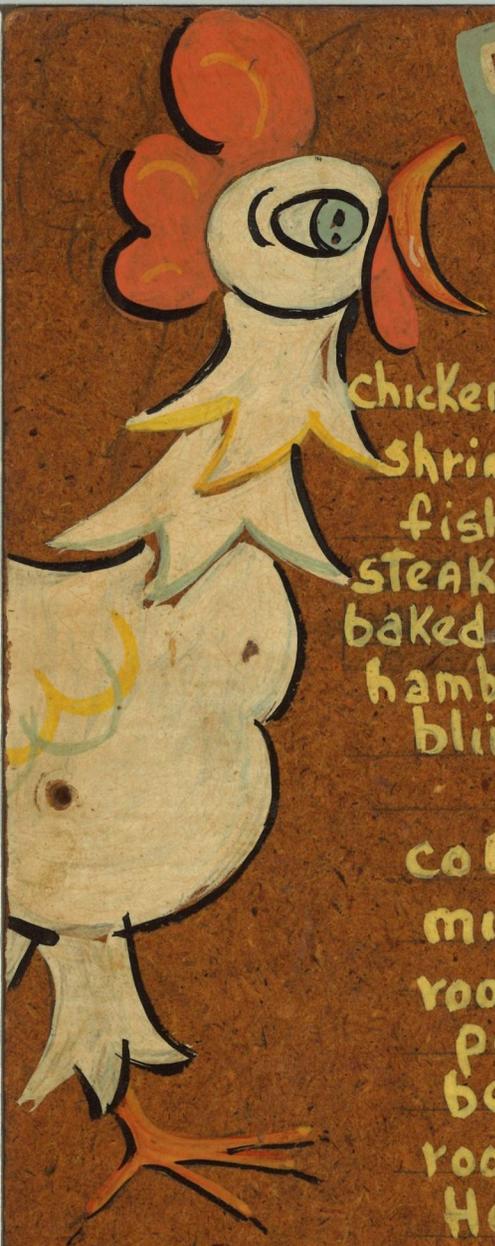


BAR-B-Q HAMBURGER	25c
HOT DANISH BEEF	35c
VEGETABLE HAMBURGER	35c
CHEESEBURGER	35c
HAMBURGER	30c
STEAK SANDWICH	50c
BAKED HAM	50c
CHICKEN SALAD	25c
BRAUNSCHWEIGER	25c
BRICK CHEESE	25c
EGG SALAD	25c
ZIP DOG	25c
HOT DOG	20c



FRENCH FRIES	25c
POTATO SALAD	20c
VEGETABLE SALADS	15c & 25c
HOME BAKED BEANS	10c

FEED BAG



chicken in a basket ~	\$1.35
shrimp in a basket ~	1.35
fish sticks ~	1.00
steak sandwich deluxe	.70
baked ham & potato salad	.75
hamburger deluxe	.50
blimps	.35
coffee ~	.10
milk ~	.10
root beer ~	.054.10
pop ~	.10
beer ~	.25
root beer floats ~	.20
Holy cow ~	.20

~ SANDWICHES ~

steak sandwich ~	.50
baked ham ~	.50
hot Danish beef ~	.30
vegetable hamburger	.30
hamburger ~	.25
chicken salad ~	.25
braunschweiger ~	.25
french fries ~	.25
egg salad ~	.20
brick cheese ~	.20
potato salad ~	.20
vegetable salads	.154.25
hot dog ~	.15
German delight ~	.20
home baked beans	.10

CANDY - GUM - CIGARETTES - ICE CREAM BARS
TAKE HOME BOXES OF CHICKEN AND SHRIMP

RON & NAN

phone - 1680-X