



KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

White Castle

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of fast food hamburger chains? Although these days it is difficult to break through the fast food clutter, things were quite different during the early part of the 20th century. Fast food was a novelty back then when two men opened a restaurant that would change the way Americans eat for good.

In 1921, entrepreneur Billy Ingram and cook Walter Anderson sought to change Americans' perceptions of the meat packing industry and sanitation conditions exposed in Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle." Anderson developed an efficient method for cooking hamburgers made of fresh ground beef and onions. The ground beef would be pressed into hamburgers by a machine, with a slice of pickle added between the bun before serving.

The two businessmen took their ideas and opened the first White Castle restaurant in Wichita, Kan., on \$700 of borrowed money. Hamburgers were offered at a price of just \$.05 each. The White Castle building architecture featured a white exterior with a tower at one corner to resemble medieval castles.

Because White Castle became the first fast-food hamburger chain ever, they had to develop a means for supplying each of its restaurants. Centralized bakeries and warehouses were established, as well as a paper products subsidiary. In 1930, the company started Craveology, a method for finding the nutritional value of the chain's food. The chain even had a medical student eat nothing but hamburgers for 13 weeks to prove the food was healthy.

The following year, White Castle started using a new process for making the burgers. They used frozen beef patties, but assured quality and freshness through their steam-grilling process in which the burgers did not have to be flipped. In 1932, White Castle ran the nation's first fast-food coupon advertising campaign, offering five burgers for the price of two at carry out.

Ingram bought out Anderson in 1933 and moved the White Castle headquarters to Columbus, Ohio, where they still remain today. In 1954, White Castle patented its frozen patty burgers, which now were made with five holes in them for more efficient cooking. The Slider[®] quickly became an American favorite, and by 1961, the chain had served more than 1 billion hamburgers.

In 1987, White Castle became available to Americans via the local grocery store. Both hamburgers and cheeseburgers were offered precooked in the frozen section. The company also then created the Castle Meal[®] for kids. In 2001, White Castle began honoring its "Cravers" in its Cravers' Hall of Fame for its 80th anniversary.

White Castle has been referenced in numerous songs and films, including "Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle." White Castle is composed of more than 380 restaurants across the country, but will always be a legendary Kansas first.

