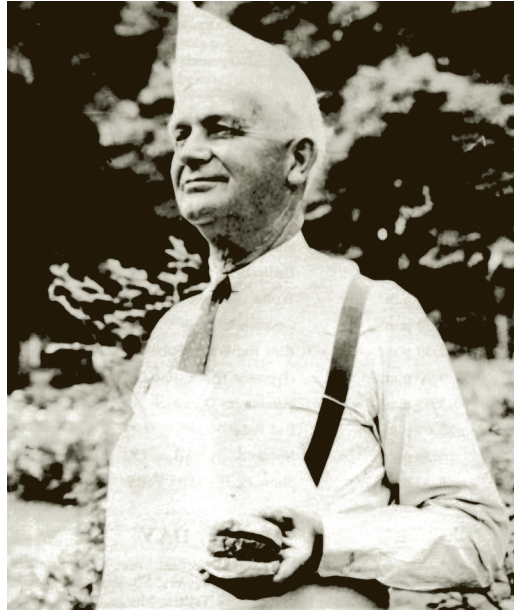


Fast food and fast-food restaurants did not always exist. In fact, hamburgers had a bad reputation when they were first introduced in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Read the excerpt about the beginnings of fast food and answer the questions that follow.

The Pioneers

from *Chew on This*

by Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson



Hamburger Charlie

- T**he story of fast food begins in October 1885, near the small town of Seymour, Wisconsin. A friendly and outgoing fifteen-year-old boy named Charlie Nagreen was driving his family's ox cart down a dirt road amid wide-open fields. Charlie was going to Outagamie County's first annual fair, where he wanted to earn some extra money selling meatballs. What happened next was the unlikely origin of a delicious sandwich that would one day change the world.
- As Charlie sold meatballs at the fair, he noticed that customers had trouble eating them and strolling at the same time. People were impatient. They wanted to visit

Mr. John Bull's popular beehives (encased in glass), to see the fancy new harvesting machines, and to enjoy all the other thrilling attractions at the fair. They didn't want to waste time eating meatballs. Charlie suddenly had an idea: if he squashed the meatballs and put them between two slices of bread, people could walk and eat. And so Charlie invented the hamburger.

- 3 German immigrants lived in Charlie's hometown of Hortonville, Wisconsin, and he later claimed that the new sandwich was named after the German town of Hamburg, long famous for its ground-beef steaks. Charlie continued selling burgers at the Outagamie County Fair until 1951. By then he was an old man who liked to sing this rhyme while flipping burgers on the grill:

*Hamburgers, hamburgers, hamburgers hot!
Onions in the middle, pickle on top.
Makes your lips go flippity flop.*

Charlie had not only invented the hamburger but also composed one of the first advertising jingles for it.

- 4 A number of other cities—including New Haven, Connecticut; Akron, Ohio; and Hamburg, New York—now claim to be the true birthplace of America's favorite sandwich. But the residents of Seymour, Wisconsin, will have none of that. The signs that welcome people into Seymour let everybody know they're entering THE HOME OF THE HAMBURGER. And every August the town has a big parade in honor of Hamburger Charlie.

killer burgers

- 5 Despite Charlie's best efforts, burgers didn't become America's national dish overnight. For a long time after that 1885 Outagamie County Fair, hamburger meat had a bad reputation. Many people assumed that ground beef was dirty. According to one historian, during the early 1900s the hamburger was considered "a food for the poor," polluted and unsafe to eat. Restaurants generally didn't sell them. Burgers were served at lunch carts parked near factories, at circuses and carnivals. It was widely believed that ground beef was made from rotten old meat full of chemical preservatives. "The hamburger habit is just about as safe," one food critic warned, "as getting meat out of a garbage can."

**ONE DEAD, SIX ARE ILL
FROM POISONED DINNER**

Paterson Man's Whole Household
Affected, Possibly from Arsenic.

AGED WOMAN SOON SUCCUMBS

One Victim, Eating Only Beef, Is Af-
fected as Are the Others—County
Physician's Inquiry.

- 6 The hamburger's reputation wasn't helped when murderers started using ground beef to kill people. In 1910, Alexander J. Moody, a wealthy baker from Chicago, died after somebody put poison in his burger. The police were never able to solve the case. One year later, a Chicago pie maker was poisoned the same way. Similar murder stories appeared in newspapers across the United States. Ground beef seemed like the perfect food in which to hide a deadly poison.

**Death by hamburger,
April 1904**

7 The widespread fear of hamburgers caused a great deal of frustration among butchers. They liked to grind leftover pieces of beef into hamburger meat. They liked selling every scrap of meat in the store. They didn't want to waste any of it. But most customers preferred to buy solid pieces of steak. That way you could see exactly what you were buying—and feel confident there was nothing poisonous in it.

8 In 1925, when New Yorkers were asked to name their favorite meal, hamburger ranked nineteenth. Of the 180,000 people who voted for their favorites, just 2,912 voted for hamburger. It beat out gefilte fish (1,361 votes). But the burger lost big to corned beef and cabbage (23,061 votes) and roast loin of pork (5,411 votes). By a wide margin, most New Yorkers even preferred eating cow tongue and spinach (8,400 votes).

9 Around this time Walt Anderson set out to defend the hamburger from its many critics. A former janitor and short-order cook, Walt loved burgers and opened a small restaurant in Wichita, Kansas, devoted to selling them. Walt grilled the burgers right in front of his customers, so they could see for themselves that the meat and the equipment were clean. The place was so successful that Walt found a business partner and started opening more hamburger restaurants, built in the shape of small white medieval forts. Walt called them White Castles, a name suggesting that the place was solid and the food was pure. White Castle restaurants claimed that their ground beef was delivered twice a day, to insure freshness, and supported an unusual experiment at the University of Minnesota. For thirteen weeks a medical student there consumed nothing but White Castle burgers and water. When the student not only survived the experiment but also seemed pretty healthy, people started to view hamburgers in a new light. Now hamburgers seemed wholesome, not deadly.

10 White Castle was popular among workingmen in the East and the Midwest, but it didn't attract many women or children. It didn't turn hamburgers into America's favorite sandwich or create the modern fast-food business. A pair of brothers in southern California did all that, along with a traveling salesman who for years had failed at just about everything he tried.

Food Preferences among New Yorkers, 1925

