

Thurber New York Hill Restaurant

Welcome to New York Hill Restaurant. We hope your visit here is both enjoyable and memorable. We named our restaurant “New York Hill Restaurant” in keeping with Thurber’s rich colorful history.

This restaurant is located on the site of Thurber’s Episcopal Church which was built about 1918. The Ranger Oil Boom, which is a dozen miles west of here, was on at this time and the Texas Pacific Coal and Oil Company brought in many office workers from the northeast United States to staff its Thurber office. Fine brick homes were built for these employees on the hill south of downtown Thurber, and thence this hill was called “New York Hill”.

Five important aspects of Thurber were its coal and brick production, its ethnic diversity, its role in the labor movement and its place in the Ranger Oil Boom. The lake to our west is Thurber Little Lake, the town’s “swimming pool”. Just north of this lake towards town was the school. The first coal mine was located a few hundred yards east of our restaurant and the Brick Plant just beyond there.

When the railroads switched from coal to oil and when the Ranger Oil Boom fizzled out, Thurber’s population of 10,000 faded away and Thurber became a ghost town. However, New York Hill remains a prominent feature of Thurber’s past. We hope to maintain its historical significance by providing a glimpse of this fascinating history and a pleasurable dining experience.

Thank you for your patronage.

Les, Janis and Randy Mills

A Brief History of Thurber

Thurber’s Beginnings

William and Harvey Johnson came to Texas in 1878 from Ionia, Michigan, one jump ahead of creditors from a failed merchandise business. The Johnson brothers settled in Strawn (five miles NW of Thurber) and established a successful feed, lumber and grain company. As the Texas and Pacific Railroad extended westward from Fort Worth in the early 1880’s, the railroad desperately needed coal and cross ties, and ranchers wanted cedar posts for fencing in ranges. The Johnsons supplied the cross ties and cedar posts. In his search for more timber, William Johnson met a man in northern Erath County who complained of a black, crumbly rock encountered in digging a water well. Johnson instantly recognized coal and its potential. However, it was five long years before the Johnsons had resources to buy land and sink the first coal mine shaft. A crude mining camp, Johnsonville, evolved with a general store, saloon, shacks and tents. The Johnson Brothers Coal Mining Company could not operate profitably with the wage demands of the Knights of Labor. When the miners struck in 1888 the mine was sold to Robert Dickey Hunter.

Hunter was a feisty, tightfisted Scottish-American who swore “to run my business or run it to hell.” He had very definite ideas about his company and his town which he called Thurber after one of the investors. He kicked out the Knights of Labor, lowered wages and brought in outside miners. Everything in Thurber was company-owned: stores, houses, utilities, churches and saloons. Hunter built a four strand barbed wire fence around 900 acres of Thurber and mounted guards patrolled the perimeter to keep out agitators and to prevent Thurberites from making outside purchases. There were threats on Hunter’s life and disturbances from labor agitators and disgruntled miners. Texas Rangers were called in four times before Thurber calmed down.

Hunter’s miners were paid very low wages, \$1.05 per ton, for the hellish hard work of digging at a 27 inch seam of coal from a prone position, 10 hours a day, 6 days a week. Nonetheless, Hunter poured money into making Thurber the most modern city in the southwest with electricity and running water to every home. There were no city taxes and no unemployment. Band concerts, classical operas and stage plays in a first class opera house provided some of the entertainment. However, the miners continued to grouse with the three justifiable complaints: low pay, the fence around the city, and screening of coal the miners dug. By screening, the miners lost 15-20% because they were paid for “lump” coal which would not pass through the screen openings the size of a baseball.

Brick Making

By 1897 Hunter had turned over most of his duties to his brilliant mining superintendent, W. K. Gordon. Hunter never could have succeeded in Thurber without the capable Gordon. W.K. Gordon was the opposite of Hunter: calm, polite, thoughtful, respected and well-liked by all. With Gordon handling most of Thurber’s operations, Hunter now turned to brick-making, setting up the Green and Hunter Brick Company of Thurber, Texas. The pea coal which fell through the screens and for which the miners received no pay fired the brick kilns. A large deposit of high-grade shale was available on Thurber land.

Eighteen kilns turned out 80,000 bricks a day and Thurber brick was said to be the “best brick west of the Mississippi.” Thirty-five different types of bricks were made in Thurber, but the specialty was paving brick. Thurber paving brick covered Congress Avenue in Austin, Camp Bowie and the Stockyards in Fort Worth, portions of the Old Bankhead Highway in North Central Texas and many streets in Mineral Wells, Strawn, Ranger, Eastland and Cisco.

Power for the brickyard came from a Corliss steam engine, which the brickyard called “Old Hunter”.

Road builders began paving with asphalt and the Depression slowed road building. The Thurber Brick Plant ceased operations in 1931, and the plant was salvaged. Today, the only reminders of brick making are the brick walls, foundations and scattered remnants of bricks.



APPETIZERS

BONELESS HOT WINGS - 7.25
STRIPS SERVED WITH BLEU CHEESE DRESSING

CHEESE FRIES – 5.25
TOPPED WITH MELTED CHEDDAR

FRIED PICKLES OR JALAPEÑOS
4.50
LARGE ORDER CRISPY FRIED SERVED
WITH RANCH DRESSING

ONION RINGS – 4.50
LARGE ORDER OF CRISPY FRIED ONION RINGS

CHIPS & SALSA – 4.25
CRISP CHIPS WITH HOMEMADE SALSA

NACHOS

ENJOY AS AN APPETIZER OR MEAL - ALL NACHOS SERVED
WITH JALAPEÑO PEPPERS

CHEESE NACHOS – HALF 4.75 - FULL 5.95
LOTS OF MELTED CHEDDAR

BEAN & CHEESE – HALF 5.50 - FULL 7.25
REFRIED BEANS WITH MELTED CHEDDAR

CHICKEN OR BEEF NACHO SUPREME
HALF 8.25 - FULL 9.95
CHICKEN FAJITA OR SPICY TACO MEAT,
REFRIED BEANS, MELTED CHEDDAR TOPPED FRESH
LETTUCE & TOMATO

SALADS

WE SERVE THE FRESHEST RANCH, FAT FREE RANCH, BLEU CHEESE, FRENCH, THOUSAND ISLAND, ITALIAN,
CATALINA, HONEY MUSTARD, VINEGAR & OIL DRESSINGS

TRADITIONAL CHEF SALAD - 6.95
FRESH LETTUCE TOPPED WITH HAM, SHREDDED CHEDDAR, DICED TOMATO & EGG

GRILLED OR CRISPY CHICKEN CHEF SALAD - 7.95
FRESH LETTUCE TOPPED WITH GRILLED FAJITA CHICKEN, SHREDDED CHEDDAR, DICED TOMATO & EGG

TACO SALAD - 7.50
FRESH LETTUCE TOPPED WITH SPICY TACO MEAT, SHREDDED CHEDDAR, DICED TOMATO & ONION

GAY'S SALAD - 6.50
DINNER SALAD TOPPED WITH GRILLED FAJITA CHICKEN & DICED TOMATO

DINNER SALAD - 2.25

LIGHTER MEALS

SERVED WITH A DINNER SALAD AND 2 SIDES:
PEACHES, COTTAGE CHEESE, MASHED POTATOES , FRIES OR GREEN BEANS

CHICKEN BREAST - 7.25
ONE BREAST GRILLED OR FRIED

CHOPPED SIRLOIN - 6.95
8 OZ BEEF PATTY
CHARBROILED

PORK CHOP - 7.25
ONE CHOP GRILLED OR FRIED

CHICKEN TENDERS – 6.95
SMALL ORDER OF TENDERS SERVED
W/ CREAM GRAVY

SPECIALTIES FROM THE GRILL

STEAKS CUT FRESH DAILY AND CHARBROILED TO YOUR SATISFACTION

7 OZ SIRLOIN.....	9.95	12 OZ RIB-EYE.....	16.95
12 OZ SIRLOIN.....	12.95	16 OZ T-BONE.....	19.95
CHOP SIRLOIN (BACON -WRAPPED)	9.25	8 OZ FILET MIGNON.....	16.95

ADD 10 PIECE GRILLED OR 5 PIECE JUMBO FRIED SHRIMP TO ANY STEAK \$5.00

TEXAS SIZZLER – 10.25

CHOPPED SIRLOIN FILLED WITH DICED ONIONS & JALAPEÑOS, COVERED WITH MELTED CHEDDAR

HAMBURGER STEAK – 9.50

CHOPPED SIRLOIN FILLED WITH DICED ONIONS, COVERED WITH BROWN GRAVY

SOUTHWEST CHICKEN OR CHOP – 10.50

TWO CHARBROILED CHICKEN BREASTS OR CHOPPED SIRLOIN TOPPED WITH MELTED PEPPER JACK CHEESE, SAUTÉED ONIONS, BELL PEPPERS & TOMATOES

NEW YORK HILL FAVORITES

CHICKEN FRIED STEAK - SMALL - 9.50 LARGE - 10.95
COVERED WITH CREAM GRAVY

CHICKEN TENDERS – 8.95
SERVED WITH CREAM GRAVY

FRIED CHICKEN LIVERS OR GIZZARDS – SMALL - 7.50 LARGE - 8.75
FRIED CRISP SERVED WITH CREAM GRAVY

PORK CHOPS – 9.25
GRILLED WITH LEMON BUTTER SEASONING OR FRIED SERVED WITH CREAM GRAVY

CHICKEN BREAST – 9.25
BASTED IN OUR SPECIAL SAUCE AND GRILLED OR FRIED SERVED WITH CREAM GRAVY

FISH & SEAFOOD

CATFISH FILET – 8.50
DEEP FRIED OR GRILLED SERVED WITH TARTAR SAUCE

SHRIMP – GRILLED OR FRIED – 9.95
20 SHRIMP SAUTÉED IN LEMON BUTTER OR 10 JUMBO SHRIMP FRIED SERVED WITH RED SAUCE

SHRIMP BASKET - 7.50
GENEROUS PORTION OF PETITE SHRIMP FRIED CRISP SERVED WITH RED SAUCE

ALL DINNERS SERVED WITH SALAD, AND YOUR CHOICE OF POTATO OR GREEN BEANS & HOMEMADE ROLLS
STUFF YOUR BAKED POTATO WITH CHEESE, BACON BITS AND CHIVES .75

SANDWICHES

SERVED WITH FRENCH FRIES - SUBSTITUTES .75 EXTRA

HAMBURGER – 5.95

CHARBROILED, WITH MUSTARD, LETTUCE, TOMATO,
PICKLES & ONION

CHEESE BURGER – 6.50

YOUR CHOICE AMERICAN, SWISS, OR PEPPER JACK

BACON CHEESE BURGER – 6.95

WITH MUSTARD, LETTUCE, TOMATO, PICKLES & ONION

DOUBLE MEAT CHEESE BURGER – 8.50

2 - 8 OZ PATTIES, CHARBROILED, WITH MUSTARD, LETTUCE,
TOMATO, PICKLES & ONION & YOUR CHOICE OF AMERICAN,
SWISS, OR PEPPER JACK CHEESE

BUFFALO BURGER – 8.50

CHARBROILED WITH MUSTARD, LETTUCE, TOMATO,
PICKLES & ONION

THREE DECKER CLUB – 6.50

HAM, CRISP BACON, SWISS, MAYO,
LETTUCE & TOMATO

CHICKEN BREAST – 7.25

GRILLED OR FRIED WITH MAYO,
LETTUCE & TOMATO

CHICKEN FRIED STEAK – 7.95

WITH MAYO, LETTUCE & TOMATO

HOT STEAK SANDWICH – 7.95

CHICKEN FRY SERVED ON TOAST SMOTHERED
WITH CREAM GRAVY

CHOPPED BBQ – 5.95

BRISKET SERVED WITH ONIONS AND PICKLES

FAJITA STEAK SANDWICH – 6.50

BEEF FAJITA WITH GRILLED ONIONS AND SWISS CHEESE

HOT HAM & CHEESE – 5.50

GRILLED HAM WITH AMERICAN CHEESE

BLT – 5.50

LOTS OF CRISP BACON WITH MAYO, LETTUCE & TOMATO

TEX - MEX

SERVED WITH CHIPS & SALSA OR A DINNER SALAD

HOMEMADE CHILI – 5.25

TOPPED WITH SHREDDED CHEDDAR WITH SIDE OF CHOPPED ONIONS

ENCHILADA DINNER – 7.75

THREE CHEESE & ONION ENCHILADAS COVERED WITH CHILI & CHEDDAR,
SERVED WITH RICE & BEANS

TACO DINNER – 7.75

THREE SPICY BEEF TACOS SERVED WITH RICE & BEANS

SIDES

BAKED POTATO – 2.25

LOADED BAKED POTATO – 3.00

MASHED POTATOES – 2.00

GREEN BEANS
SMALL 1.50 LARGE 2.00

PINTO BEANS
SMALL 1.50 LARGE 2.00

SLICED JALAPEÑOS – .75

GRILLED MUSHROOMS OR ONIONS -1.00

ONION RINGS – 2.25

FRIED OKRA
SMALL 1.50 LARGE 2.00

FRENCH FRIES – 2.00

COTTAGE CHEESE – 2.00

PEACHES – 2.25

SOUP – 2.25
(CHICKEN NOODLE, VEGETABLE OR TOMATO)

MUSHROOM GRAVY – 1.25

BEVERAGES

TEA OR COFFEE - 1.50

SOFT DRINKS

LARGE - 4.00 MED 2.50 SMALL 1.25
1 REFILL ON SOFT DRINKS AT NO ADDITIONAL CHARGE

LEMONADE - 2.50

MILK - 2.50

DESSERTS

HOT HOMEMADE BROWNIE AND ICE CREAM
(TOPPED WITH CARMEL, CHOCOLATE SAUCE, CHOPPED NUTS, WHIPPED CREAM AND A CHERRY)
4.75

HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK PIE
3.50

HOT HOMEMADE CINNAMON ROLL
3.50

FRESH BAKED APPLE OR PECAN PIE
3.00

WITH ICE CREAM
3.95

CHOCOLATE OR COCONUT MERINGUE PIE
3.50

VANILLA ICE CREAM
1.25

Miners Strike of 1903 Began Labor Movement in Southwest

Since 1898, when R.D. Hunter kicked out the Knights of Labor, union activities were absolutely forbidden in Thurber. Organizers were beaten and thrown outside Thurber's barbed wire fence. By 1903, conditions in Thurber had changed greatly. The Texas and Pacific Coal Company now had a tremendous investment in Thurber: machinery, buildings, houses, utilities, a brick plant, dairy, merchandise and stores. The company was vulnerable to a union strike. By 1900 the coal miners in nearby Strawn and Lyra were organized and the United Mine Workers now looked at Thurber.

One problem in organizing Thurber miners was the many different languages of the immigrant miners. Multilingual organizers were required, especially Italian, Polish and Spanish.

Thurber miners walked out and on Friday, September 11, 1903. Miners and families began deserting Thurber. By Monday, Thurber was totally abandoned, and an uncanny silence blanketed the city.

On October 8, 1903, a union charter was granted to the miners of Thurber. Since this was the first successful labor strike in the Southwest, it was considered the beginning of the labor movement in the Southwest.

From a strict non-union town, Thurber became the first totally unionized city in America. Seven different unions covered each and every worker in Thurber. Thurber's fence came down, pay went up and the screen was out. The brick makers were granted a unique concession. On each Thurber brick an union symbol was imprinted, a triangle with the letters "B", "T" and "T" at each apex, "Brick, Tile and Terracotta Workers of America."

There was another strange twist to the unionization of Thurber's miners. All union officers were English-speaking Americans, and there were three times as many Italian miners as any other ethnic group. The Italians complained union officers ignored their grievances and religious holidays, threatening to bring in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a socialistic-oriented union. As a result, in 1906 the UMW also granted the Italian miners Charter #2763. The Polish, Mexican and African-American miners switched to the "Italian Local," making this local several times larger than the English-speaking local.

Ethnic Diversity of Thurber

If Ellis Island was "The Melting Pot of the World", Thurber was "The Melting Pan." Eighteen different immigrant nationalities comprised Thurber's population. Thurber was another example of America opening its arms to the oppressed. Many Eastern European immigrants came to Thurber to escape brutal socio-economic conditions in the "Old Country."

The Italians were the most colorful of the immigrant groups with their singing, bocce ball games and outdoor bread ovens. Many Italians were trained musicians who made up several outstanding bands in Thurber. There were weekly band concerts, and the official band of Thurber, The Hunter Band, often played at the Fat Stock Show and the State Fair of Texas. When the miners were thrown out of work in 1921 prohibition was in force. Many Italians who lived in nearby Thurber Junction turned to bootlegging for a living. Their "grappo" (grape) whiskey was potent and renowned.

The Poles were known for their three day wedding celebrations where men would throw a gold coin at a dinner plate, trying to break it to earn the privilege of a dance with the bride.

Thurberites always looked for an excuse to celebrate: a wedding, a holiday, a religious feast day, a Baptism or a visiting dignitary. Three dance pavilions were available in different areas of Thurber.

Ethnic groups clustered in different sections of Thurber according to nationalities; the Mexicans on Stump Hill (west of Little Lake), Polander Hill, north of Stump Hill and across I-20 and Italian Hill further north. The African-Americans resided at the foot of New York Hill and the New Englander oil people on New York Hill. The rest of the population was spread out around downtown Thurber.

Thurber's Decline

The years from 1903 to 1920 were bounteous years for the Thurberites. There was stability, families grew and there was security in work and belonging to a great nation. Thurber coal production peaked at 2000 tons per day in 1915.

Ever since Spindletop at Beaumont, Texas, in 1901, the big money talk was oil. Some railroads changed from coal to oil prior to WWI.

W.K. Gordon, Thurber's General Manager, began drilling test holes for oil in 1913, and was convinced oil was in Thurber's vicinity. He leased 300,000 acres for the T&P Coal Company. In 1917, Gordon's first well, the Nannie Walker, in Ranger, Texas, a dozen miles west of Thurber hit gas. The well was abandoned because there was no market for gas at the time. The second well, the McClesky, blew in strong and the Ranger Oil Boom was on.

By 1916 Thurber coal miners walked out for three weeks to get a 5¢ per ton increase in wages. It was apparent the limit to coal profitability was being reached.

By 1921 most railroads has switched from coal to oil and there was a continuous decrease in coal orders. The company was now named "The Texas and Pacific Coal and Oil Company" and the company proposed a reduction in wages. The union declined and the company "locked out" the miners and ordered them to abandon company housing. The Thurber Coal Mines were closed after thirty years and miners drifted away to seek work elsewhere.

In 1931 the Thurber Brick Plant closed and the Ranger Oil Boom had fizzled out. The T&P Oil Company, as it was now called, moved its headquarters from Thurber to Fort Worth. The company salvaged and sold everything in Thurber except two brick buildings, the smokestack, the fire station and three houses.

There are 127,000,000 tons of coal remaining under Thurber. There are many who believe when oil and gas plays out, Thurber's coal will be recovered by modern technology, such as gasification.



We hope you enjoy the history we have on display! We want to thank those who helped collect and donate items for all to enjoy. The history on this menu was collected from information received from Leo Bielinski, Tarleton Library, Southwest Collection (Texas Tech), Weldon Hardman's "FIRE IN THE HOLE," and the Thurber Historical Association. Special thanks goes to Gay, Brother Bill, Carolyn, Monya, Alma, Leo, Bob and Max (we couldn't have done it without you). We want to acknowledge our friends and family for their prayers, concern, love and encouragement. Our sincere gratitude is extended to you, our customer, who have helped make our dream a reality.

Love and Appreciation,
The Mills