

The Fabulous Brown Derby

Having grown up in and around Los Angeles, this is one of those great old places that I visited several times in the 1950s. I was only a kid then, of course, but I certainly remember that restaurant in the shape of a Derby! The Brown Derby legend began as the brainchild of Herb Somborn, Wilson Mizner and Sid Grauman. It was Somborn who asked Bob Cobb to manage the new restaurant and, after Mizner and Somborn died in 1934, it was Cobb who took over the restaurants.

The first Brown Derby opened in 1926 on Wilshire Boulevard across from the Ambassador Hotel. It was the only one of the four Derby restaurants built in the shape of the famous hat. In 1931, the Beverly Hills Brown Derby opened at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Rodeo Drive. The last of the Derbies opened in Los Feliz in 1941. But it was the Hollywood Brown Derby on Vine Street, just south of Hollywood Boulevard, that was the most famous. Opened on Valentine's Day, 1929, it became the place where movie stars and celebrities of all types, gathered. It became synonymous with Hollywood. I believe fire destroyed it in 1981. The original Brown Derby has been painstakingly recreated at the

D i s n e y - M G M studios in...where else?...Hollywood! To the right is a cover from the recreated restaurant, and I have 7 covers from the Brown Derby restaurants. There must be others, I imagine.

