

City Beat

There are eight million stories in my albums. This is one of them...

Coon Chicken Inn was an American chain of four restaurants founded by Maxon Lester Graham and Adelaide Burt in 1925, which prospered until the late 1950s. The restaurant's name uses an ethnic slur, and the trademarks and entrances of the restaurants were designed to look like a smiling blackface caricature of an African-American porter. The smiling capped porter head also appeared on menus, dishes, and promotional items.

African Americans opposed this blatant display of racism. In 1930, the Seattle branch of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) and Seattle's African American newspaper *The Northwest Enterprise* protested the opening of the local Coon Chicken Inn by threatening Graham with a lawsuit for libel and defamation of race. In response, Graham agreed to change the style of advertising by removing the word 'Coon' from the restaurant's delivery car, repainting the 'Coon head' entrance to the restaurant, and canceling an order of 1,000 automobile tire covers. This small stride, however, was not enough to fully erase the image of the caricature from Seattle. Graham violated his agreement with the NAACP but managed to evade the lawsuit by changing the color of the Coon logo from black to blue.

The first Coon Chicken Inn was opened in suburban Salt Lake City, Utah in 1925. In 1929, another restaurant was opened in then-suburban Lake City, Seattle, and a third was opened in the Hollywood District of Portland, Oregon, in 1931. A fourth location was advertised but never opened in Spokane, Washington. Later, a cabaret, orchestra, and catering were added to the Seattle and Salt Lake restaurants.

Due to change in popular culture and the general consideration of being culturally and racially offensive, the chain has since been discontinued.

