



Cole's, Originator of the French Dip, A Few Historical Facts

Cole's, creator of the French Dip sandwich, is the oldest restaurant and saloon in Los Angeles. Established in 1908, Cole's is housed in the hollow of the historic Pacific Electric Building, once the center of real estate and transit tycoon Henry Huntington's Pacific Electric Red Car railway network.

Cole's rich and storied past is interwoven into the history of Los Angeles. At its peak, 100,000 passengers passed through the city's vital railway hub daily, many of them stopping for food and drink. The following facts will give you historical perspective:

- 1908 Ford introduces the Model T, the car that put America on wheels
- 1908 The Wright brothers registered their flying machine for a U.S. patent
- 1908 Entrepreneur Harry Cole takes over a terminal for horse-drawn streetcars, sprinkles sawdust on the floor, and opens Cole's

Not long after opening Cole's, a customer asked Jack Garlinghouse, the house chef, if he would dip the sandwich bun into the juice of the meat because his gums were sore. Jack agreed and gave the man a 'dipped' sandwich. The sandwich caught on and Cole's universally loved French Dip Sandwich was born.

Cole pioneered more than the French Dip. In 1920, in service to his clientele, Harry provided check-cashing privileges. Originally for free. When news of the accommodation spread, lines formed from nine in the morning until midnight. Cole then conceived of the idea of making check-cashing a regular business, LA's first, instituting a series of fixed charges, and schooling his 13 year old son to run the operation, dealing out dollars several hours a day, mounted on a soapbox from behind a tiny metal cage at the back of the restaurant.

In 1933, Rawland Cole, 24, now chief cashier at the company's lucrative check cashing arm, doled out \$1,000,000 a month, cashing more checks from the back corner of Cole's than most of the country's leading banks.

Volstead Amendment Day, April 7, 1933, mandated by newly elected President Roosevelt spurred by a campaign promise to legalize alcohol, represents another auspicious occasion in the saloon's history. Cole's sold a record fifty-eight 32-gallon kegs; or 19,000 gallons of beer the first day California lifted the ban on beer, signaling the beginning of the end of Prohibition and the ratification of the 21st amendment, December 5, 1933, allowing the national flow of beer, wine, & spirits.

Cole's has served as the location for hundreds of movie and television productions including Forrest Gump, Spiderman, Los Angeles Confidential and the Profiler.

In 1974, Cole's was designated by the City as Historical Landmark Site #104 and a State Point of Historical Interest.

Sources:

Los Angeles Times (1888-Curent File; Aug 27, 1933; ProQuest Historical Newspapers

Los Angels Times (1881-1986)

History of Coles P.E. Buffet, Los Angeles cultural historical monument number 104, City of Los Angeles

LA Times, History Department, LA Public Library, LA Times, Monday, June 17, 1996, Cecilia Rasmussen,

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