

The Gordonsville Exchange Hotel opened in 1860, providing an elegant stopping place for passengers on the Virginia Central Railway until March 1862, when the Army of Northern Virginia transformed the Exchange Hotel into the Gordonsville Receiving Hospital. During the Civil War, the “Chicken Vendors” served thousands of hungry soldiers on the trains.

Following the war, the women continued serving rail passengers succulent fried chicken and delicious fried pies made with Early Harvest, Yellow, or other “acid” apples. Chicken legs and breasts cost fifteen cents; backs and wings, five and ten cents. By 1879, the Gordonsville Town Council required a “snack vendor’s” license and payment of a license tax.

The modernization of rail service with the addition of dining cars; the replacement of wooden coaches with steel cars with closed vestibules; and finally air-conditioned cars with sealed windows ended a century of tradition.

*Orange County Visitors Bureau  
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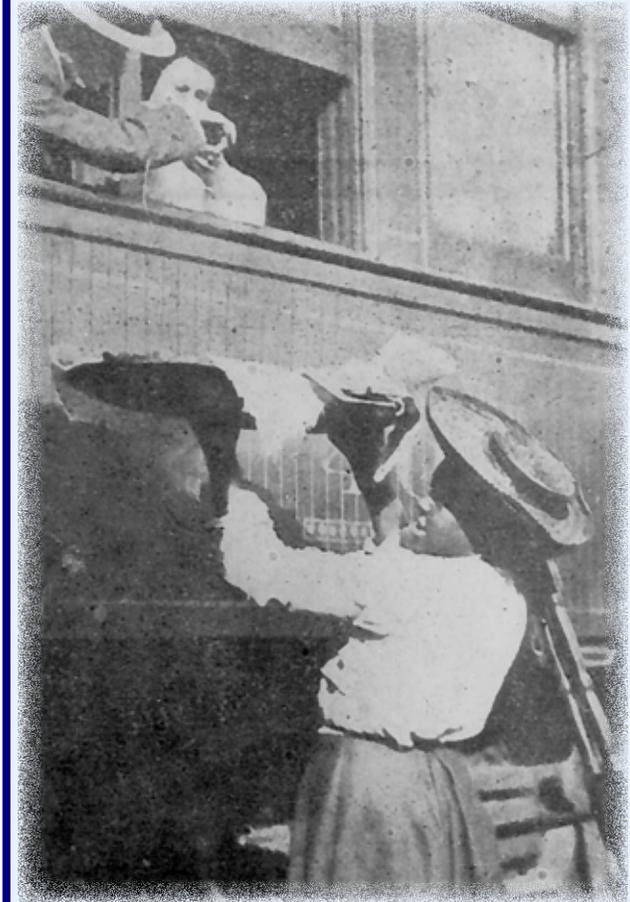
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# *Gordonsville,* *Fried Chicken Capital of the World!*



*One wouldn't expect a small town at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains to be considered the "Fried Chicken Capital of the World", but indeed, one time in history the title belonged to Gordonsville.*

# Gordonsville, Fried Chicken Capital of the World! It all started with the railroad...

**O**n January 1, 1840, the arrival of the iron horse changed Gordonsville forever, contributing immeasurably to its growth and vitality as a prime rail junction. The two railroads that formed that junction were the east-west Virginia Central, and the north-south Orange and Alexandria.

With the introduction of rail service, enterprising African-American women started a tradition that was to label Gordonsville forever as the “Fried Chicken Capital of the World.”

In those days, passenger trains did not enjoy the luxury of dining cars. Instead, they were greeted by “Waiter Carriers” who later became known as “Chicken Vendors.” The women balanced platters of fried chicken on their heads and served hungry passengers through open coach windows.



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*Remember*

*Celebrate!*