

DERBY – GREAT PLACE, GREAT BASE

*"The noblest of all dogs is the hot dog.
It feeds the hand that bites it".*

Derby set to celebrate inventor of the hot dog on August 10

Which Englishman has made the greatest impact on the United States of America? Let's hear it for Harry M Stevens, eldest son of James Stevens, a foreman of Midland Railway Locomotive in Derby.

"The Harry Stevens Hot Dog Street Party", at Annie's Burger Shack on Saturday August 10, is a timely reminder of his influence on popular American culture. Not to mention, an opportunity to once again pay tribute to the man who allegedly "invented" the hot dog - the world's most popular fast food.

Even the legendary Babe Ruth was proud to call the man from Derby: "My second dad".

Credited, also, with designing the baseball scorecard still used to this day, and with pioneering the drinking of soda through a paper straw, Harry's major claim to fame is nevertheless the way in which his name is now synonymous with the hot dog.

Born in Derby more than one hundred and fifty years ago, Harry became a caterer in his home-town - supplying, amongst others, Normanton Barracks with milk - before emigrating with his family to Ohio in the 1880s. The entrepreneurial flair, which he put to such great effect later in life, led him to believe that he could make money from catering at large sporting events in the United States.

The most popular story concerning Harry Stevens relates to a chilly April day at New York City's Polo Ground, in 1901. By now, Stevens had the catering concession for major league baseball games, but was losing money trying to sell ice cream and cold soda. He sent out his salesmen to buy up all of the 'dachshund' sausages they could find, along with rolls to put them in, and encouraged his vendors to go round the ground shouting "They're red hot. Get your dachshund sausages here".

The story continues that newspaper cartoonist Tad Dorgan, short on ideas and working to a tight deadline, drew inspiration from what he saw and drew a barking dachshund sausage nestling in a roll. Not sure how to spell "dachshund", he scrawled the words "hot dog" on his cartoon instead.

The drawing became famous. So did the hot dog's connection with baseball. And another American icon was born.

Academic and historic research may have subsequently proven that others before Stevens - from the 1st Century AD, through to vendors outside student dorms in the 1890s - had been eating, and selling, sausages in bread and buns long before Stevens' invention. But none remain as deeply entrenched in American culture as the Derbeian's dachshund.

"The Harry Stevens Hot Dog Street Party" at Annie's Burger Shack - a little piece of Rhode Island, USA, inside a beautiful 1937 Grade II listed building at Friary Street - will be a free-to-attend day of music, entertainment and plenty of food.

It will also feature a gin bar, a cider bar, baseball dunk tank, vintage motorcycles and cars, a dachshund dash for charity, kids games, and the screening of a 1952 baseball game.

Visit <https://anniesburgershack.com/event/the-harry-stevens-hot-dog-street-party-at-annies-derby/2019-08-10> for further details of the event.



Derby City Council

Derby Tourism, Assembly Rooms, Market Place, Derby DE1 3AH

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For further information, please contact:

Michelle Booth

(michelle.booth@derby.gov.uk)

01332-256201

EDITOR'S NOTES:

So whatever became of that humble snack?

Millions, if not billions, later, the hot dog is still going strong, and is forever linked to both the sport of baseball and American popular culture as a whole.

It is said Babe Ruth once downed 24 of them between back-to-back games, that movie actress Marlene Dietrich described hot dogs and champagne as her favourite meal, and that Franklin D Roosevelt and his wife Eleanor thought long and hard before deciding to include hot dogs on the menu when King George VI visited New York in June 1939.

Following Harry's death in May 1934, generations of the Stevens family maintained his traditions and developed the Harry M Stevens business into a catering giant.

In 1996, Harry's name was once again back in the headlines, when 166 items of his baseball memorabilia were auctioned off for \$385,000 in New York City. A photograph of Babe Ruth hitting his 60th home run inscribed "To my second dad Harry M Stevens from Babe Ruth December 25th 1927", was bought by a Cincinnati collector Steve Walter for \$22,000.

The son of a railway foreman, who took the fast track to fame and fortune in America, will be remembered in a number of ways in Derby during the 150th anniversary of his birth.

For further details, visit www.visitderby.co.uk/harrystevens.



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